



EJED

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

January – June 2020

Volume 3, Issue 1

ISSN 2601-8616 (print)

ISSN 2601-8624 (online)

ISSN 2601-8616



9 772601 861007

REVISTIA  
PUBLISHING AND RESEARCH

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

January – June 2020

Volume 3, Issue 1

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the material in this book is true, correct, complete, and appropriate at the time of writing. Nevertheless, the publishers, the editors and the authors do not accept responsibility for any omission or error, or for any injury, damage, loss, or financial consequences arising from the use of the book. The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of Revistia.

Typeset by Revistia

Copyright © Revistia. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher or author, except in the case of a reviewer, who may quote brief passages embodied in critical articles or in a review.

Address: 11, Portland Road, London, SE25 4UF, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 2080680407

E-Mail: [office@revistia.org](mailto:office@revistia.org)

Web: <https://ejed.revistia.org>

ISSN 2601-8616 (print)

ISSN 2601-8624 (online)

Indexed in Elsevier's Mendeley, WorldCat, RePEc & Ideas, Google Scholar, Crossref

## **International Editorial and Advisory Board**

**Felice Corona**, PhD - University of Salerno, Italy

**Sohail Amjad** - University of Engineering and Technology, Mardan

**Javier Cachón Zagalaz**, PhD - Universidad de Jaén, Spain

**Souad Guessar**, PhD - Tahri Mohamed University of Béchar, Algeria

**Warda Sada Gerges**, PhD - Kaye College of Education, Israel

**Enkhtuya Dandar** - University of Science and Technology, Mongolia

**Selma Maria Abdalla Dias Barbosa**, PhD - Federal University of Tocantins, UFT, Brazil

**Sophia Moralishvili**, PhD - Georgian Technical University, Tblis, Georgia

**Irina Golitsyna**, PhD - Kazan (Volga) Federal University, Russia

**José Jesús Alvarado Cabral**, PhD - Centro de Actualización del Magisterio, Durango, México

**Jean d'Amour** - Åbo Akademi University, Finland

**Ornela Bilali**, PhD - "Aleksander Xhuvani" University, Albania

**Suo Yan Ju**, PhD - University Science Islam, Malaysia

**Jesus Francisco Gutierrez Ocampo**, PhD - Tecnológico Nacional de Mexico

**Goran Sučić**, PhD - Filozofski fakultet, sveučilišta u Splitu, Hrvatska

**Siavash Bakhtiar**, PhD - School of Linguistics, Queen Mary University of London, UK

**Célia Taborda Silva**, PhD - Universidade Lusófona do Porto, Portugal

**Khaled Salah**, PhD - Faculty of Education - Alexandria University, Egypt

**Panduranga Charanbailu Bhatta**, PhD - Samanvaya Academy for Excellence, India

**Kristinka Ovesni**, PhD - University of Belgrade, Serbia

**Amel Alić**, PhD - University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Victoria Safonova**, PhD - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

**Nadia Jaber** - Palestinian Ministry of Education & Higher Education

**Vania Ivanova**, PhD - University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

**Somayeh Aghajani Kalkhoran**, PhD - Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

**Driss Harizi**, PhD - Hassan University of Settat, Morocco

**Suroso**, PhD - FBS UNY Indonesia

**Hend Hamed**, PhD - Ain Shams University, Egypt

**Ana Paula Marques**, PhD - University of Minho, Portugal

**Suo Yan Mei**, PhD - Sultan Idris Education University Malaysia

**Smaragda Papadopoulou**, PhD - University of Ioannina - Greece

**Syed Zafar Abbas**, PhD - Aliz Educational Institutions, Pakistan

**Landron Simon**, PhD - University of Tamkang, Taiwan

**M. G. Varvounis**, PhD - Democritus University of Thrace, Greece

**Helena Neves Almeida**, PhD - University of Coimbra, Portugal

**Mihaela Voinea**, PhD - Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania

**Vereno Brugiattelli**, PhD - University of Verona, Italy

**Tereza Kopecka**, PhD - First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University, Czech Republic

**Gentiana Muhaxhiri** - University of Gjakova, Kosovo

**Roza Zhussupova**, PhD - Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

**Tonia De Giuseppe**, PhD - University of Salerno, Italy

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**A TYPOLOGY OF STUDENT-TEACHERS' COPING WITH STRESSFUL CLASSROOM EVENTS ..... 1**  
WILFRIED ADMIRAAL

**UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' RESISTANCE TO AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN AN L2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE AT A UNIVERSITY IN LEBANON ..... 20**  
KHAIRALLAH, M.  
FLEONOVA, O.  
NICOLAS, M. O.

**COMPARATIVE EFFECTS OF ICT-INTEGRATED LEARNING STRATEGIES ON SPATIAL REASONING SKILLS AMONG NIGERIAN LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS ..... 39**  
A. G ADELEKE  
P. O. JEGEDE

**COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL EMOTIONS: THE DESIRE OF COMMUNITY AS A DIMENSION OF THE EXISTENCE..... 45**  
SIMONA PERFETTI  
ROSARIO PONZIANO

**THE EFFECTS ON THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL STATE OF STUDENTS IN THE NATIONAL EXAMS IN GREECE FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC - PILOT RESEARCH ..... 61**  
SOUSANNA-MARIA NIKOLAOU

**CONFRONTATION OF THE STRUCTURING LOGIC PREVIOUS QUESTION, NEXT QUESTION OF THE TEACHER IN THE FORMULATION OF A STATEMENT IN MATHEMATICS TO THAT OF THE STUDENT IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM POSED ..... 70**  
ANON N'GUESSAN  
N'GORAN N'FAISSOH FRANCK STEPHANE

**THE SUPPORT OF JUVENILE OFFENDER LEARNERS IN CORRECTIONAL CENTRE SCHOOLS: A SPIRITUAL WELLNESS PERSPECTIVE ..... 90**  
THERESA LYDIA BADIKSIE MANZINI

**THE INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING THE WELLNESS OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN CORRECTIONAL SCHOOLS..... 106**  
FORGET MAKHURANE

<b>ALGERIAN UNIVERSITY DURING THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC: COVID-19 - BECHAR UNIVERSITY AS A SAMPLE.....</b>	<b>121</b>
SOUAD GUESSAR	
<b>PUPIL'S INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR AND ITS IMPACT ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>131</b>
LENIDA LEKLI	

# A Typology of Student-Teachers' Coping with Stressful Classroom Events

**Wilfried Admiraal**

Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching,  
Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands

## **Abstract**

In teacher education programs, student teachers gain their first autonomous teaching experiences. While students regard the teaching practicum as the most valued part of their teacher education program, they also consider it to be the most stressful. Student teachers are most concerned about daily hassles in class, mostly related to poor student discipline. Yet they also consider direct interaction with students as the main source of their job satisfaction and a reason to enter the profession in the first place. This paradox could imply that feelings of stress do not so much result from the events themselves but from inadequate responses to classroom events. Based on cluster analysis of video-taped lessons and stimulated-recall interviews with 27 student teachers, a typology has been developed of student teachers' coping with stressful classroom events in secondary education. Responses to classroom events have been grouped into four types of coping: Varying (a combination of problem-focused actions and teaching activities ignoring the problematic classroom event), Hestitating (hesitation to either approach or avoid the classroom event, arousing at the same time tension in the relationship with students), Problem-solving (a series of problem-focused actions), and Avoiding (avoiding or ignoring the problematic classroom event). These types vary along two underlying dimensions: avoidance-approach and calmness-agitation. The coping types particularly differed in the way student teachers approached, avoid or ignored the classroom event, how agitated they were and the length of the coping response. Implications for teacher education are discussed to support student teachers with more approach-coping strategies.

**Keywords:** teaching practicum; classroom events; stress; coping; student teachers

## **Introduction**

In teacher education programmes, student teachers gain their first autonomous teaching experiences. While students regard the teaching practicum as the most valued part of their teacher education program, they also consider it to be the most stressful (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012; Ding & Wang, 2018). Student teachers are most concerned about daily hassles in class, mostly related to poor student discipline. Yet they also consider direct interaction with students as the main source of their job satisfaction and a reason to enter the profession in the first place (Pillen, Beijaard, & Den Brok 2013). This paradox could imply that feelings of stress do not so much result from the events themselves but from inadequate responses to classroom events. Blase (1986) found that in coping with student-related stressors, in-service teachers relied primarily on confrontational strategies, in other words, teacher behavior designed to reduce or eliminate perceived external sources of stress. For example, teachers tackled student discipline problems using such strategies as behavior modification, removing a student from class, scolding the student, and discussing the problem. Adaptive strategies, which do not affect the source of stress directly, but rather serve to manage its consequences for the teacher, were used less often. However, recent work of Gustems-Carnicer, Calderón and Calderón-Garrido (2019) showed the opposite for student teachers, who showed more avoidance coping strategies than approach coping strategies, with a focus on cognitive avoidance, emotional discharge and seeking alternative rewards.

In teacher education, student teachers should be taught to respond to classroom problems with appropriate strategies making direct interaction with students a source of greater job satisfaction. To be able to initiate training in the use of appropriate response strategies in teacher education programs, this study aimed at the development of a typology of student-teachers' coping with stressful classroom events.

## **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**

The theoretical framework of this study is the well-known transactional model of stress and coping (see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which is often used to describe and evaluate the stress and coping process. Stress is defined as a particular relation between the person and the environment appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and disrupting the daily routines. A key feature of this definition is the appraisal of the relation: stress is not due exclusively to environmental changes or personality traits. Coping behavior is described in terms of efforts to manage (i.e., master, reduce or tolerate) a troubled person-environment



relation. A key feature of this definition is its contextual character: coping behavior is influenced by a person's appraisal of the actual demands of the encounter and his resources for managing those demands. Coping behavior may be directed at managing or altering the problem which is causing the distress or at regulating the emotional response to the problem. The former is referred to as *problem-focused* coping behavior, and the latter as *emotion-focused* coping. Problem-focused coping behavior has to do with confrontational and problem-solving strategies, such as defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighing alternatives in terms of their cost and benefits, selecting one of them, and taking action. Emotion-focused behavior includes positive reappraisal and defensive strategies, such as avoidance, minimisation, distancing, selective attention, and positive comparison. In general, emotion-focused forms of coping behavior are more likely to be used when the assessment is that nothing can be done to modify environmental conditions. Problem-focused forms of coping behavior, on the other hand, are more often employed when such conditions are seen as amenable to change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Problematic events feature prominently in the transactional theory of stress and coping. Lazarus and Folkman report that, in general, daily events predict changes in psychosomatic health better than major life events. No doubt student teachers experience daily hassles in class during their teaching practicum and a discrepancy between perceived demands and resources is manifest when they try to cope with their practicum concerns (cf., Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, & Thornberg, 2019).

### **Student-teachers' Stress and Coping**

Student teachers consider their school teaching practicum (STP) as the most significant element of their course program for their personal and professional development as prospective teachers (Malderez, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007). In STP, student teachers take their first steps in becoming a teacher, developing their teaching competence as new teachers, increasing their teaching repertoire, and evolving relationships with school and colleagues. STP should help student teachers to bridge a challenging part of the process that beginning teachers undergo, from learning how to teach to actually starting to teach in a real classroom. As beginning teachers learn to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical context, they seem to struggle with this transition from learner-teacher to beginning teacher.

In their study on identity development of beginning teachers (12 student teachers and 12 first-year graduates), Pillen et al. (2013) examined beginning teachers' tensions and the way they cope with these tensions. These tensions dealt with their

identity as teacher vs learner, feelings of incompetence, work pressure, and ideas about teaching that conflict with the ones of their colleagues, mentor at school or institutional educator. Yet the tension that was experienced most was related to relationship of the beginning teachers with their students: Beginning teachers may feel that taking control of the class might be at the expense of a close relationship with their students. Lindqvist et al. (2019) also examined the transformation from student teacher to beginning teacher with a focus on conflicts encountered in school. The authors examined intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in teaching of student teachers during their final year of teacher education and their first year as practicing teachers. The intrapersonal conflicts were related to teachers' view of being good enough as a teacher, setting boundaries of time and engagement with teaching, and suppressing their emotions. The interpersonal conflicts dealt with teaching methods of their colleagues in school, distrust of colleagues and parents of the-teachers' teaching competence, and teachers' interaction with their students.

In a study with a focus on student-teachers' STP, Caires et al. (2012) examined the perceptions of their STP of 295 student teachers from Portugal using the Inventory of Experiences and Perceptions of the Teaching Practice developed by the authors in a previous study. Four clusters of student-teachers' experiences were distinguished: 1) learning and supervision – experiences with university supervisor, mentors and co-operating teachers in school; 2) professional and institutional socialization – experiences related to the adaption process in school and the teaching profession; 3) emotional and physical impact – experiences related to student-teachers' well-being, and 4) career aspects – experiences referring to teacher identity and teaching profession. The third scale received the lowest scores, which means that teaching practicum was perceived as a stressful and demanding period.

The relationship with their students seems to be the greatest source of stress of student teachers during their first experience as a teacher. More specific, classroom discipline (Kaldi, 2009), student misbehavior (Lewis, Romi, Wui & Katz, 2005), and students' inattentive behavior (Ding, Li, Li, & Kulm, 2010) are main concerns of student teachers during their STP. It seems that the so-called 'reality shock' has been moved from the first teaching experiences of beginning teachers to the ones of student teachers. Yet during their STP student teachers are mentored and supervised in dealing with problematic classroom events, to improve their classroom management skills and reduce feelings of stress. Searching and receiving help from supervisors, mentors and peers is one of the most mentioned coping strategies of student teachers (Lindqvist et al., 2019; Murray-Harvey, 2001; Pillen et al., 2013).

Other coping strategies student teachers apply to deal with stress are self-reflection, diversions, minimizing, positive reappraisal and avoidance as well as more logical analysis and problem solving (Gustems-Carnier et al., 2019; Murray-Harvey, 2001). But most coping strategies described in the literature about STP refer to forms of dealing with problematic classroom events on the long run, which are less relevant for coping with problematic events in the classroom, which require an immediate response. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of student-teachers' coping with stressful classroom events during STP. To be able to initiate training in the use of appropriate response strategies in teacher education programs, a typology of student-teachers' coping with stressful classroom events has been developed. The research question that directed our study was:

“What types of coping responses can be identified when student teachers cope with stressful classroom events?”

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedures**

The participants were 27 student teachers from a one-year graduate teacher education program of a large research university in the Netherlands, which prepares teachers for secondary education after four years of subject-matter studies. They were in their second school practice period, in which they carried full responsibility for some classes and were supervised at a distance by a co-operating teacher and a university supervisor. A stratified random sampling procedure has been used. The population of student teachers was first divided into nine strata, according to a combination of school subjects (Language and Arts, Science, or Social science) and starting date of their teaching practicum. Prospective participants received a telephone call from a project interviewer who requested permission to record a lesson and conduct an interview. Five participants declined to participate, because of lack of time or disapproval of the school principal, yielding a final sample of 27 student teachers. Our sample was representative of the whole group of student teachers with respect to gender, age, and subject taught, with 18 females and all student teachers 26 years of age or younger.

Video recordings were used to analyse the student teacher's coping responses and stimulated-recall interviews provided data about the nature of the classroom events and the student teacher's appraisal of the events. In all, 306 classroom events and an equal number of coping responses were analysed.

## Classroom Events

In a stimulated-recall interview, each student teacher mentioned about 10 events from the particular lesson that had required their attention. The student teachers assessed what was at stake in each event and what they had intended to do. Each interview lasted about one and a half hours. Classroom events were considered to be events perceived by student teachers as disruptions of their daily classroom routine. The nature of classroom events was assessed by assigning one score on one out of nine categories to all the participant's statements about the nature of a particular event (see Table 1). These categories were based on previous research into stressful classroom events (Admiraal, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2000). To determine the reliability of the instrument, two raters coded all 306 events. The interrater agreement (Cohen's  $\kappa$ ) was .88.

Table 1. Types of stressful classroom events

Category	Example	Percentage (n=306)
Instructional problems	Teacher makes a mistake in the explanation of some	8
Difficulties in organizing lesson	subject Teacher is distributing stencils	9 4
Difficulties with materials	Teacher uses the video player, but it does not work	22
Misbehavior whole class	Class is noisy at the beginning of a lesson	21
Misbehavior one student	Two students are constantly chattering	5
Student criticism	Some students criticize their grades for an exam	4
Low student achievement	Student pronounces a French word in a wrong way	18
Student on-task behavior	Student asks a question about an assignment	9
Student apathy	Students do not respond when a teacher invites two of them	

Table 1 shows students' misbehavior (of either one student or the whole class) was relatively often perceived as a stressful classroom event (43%). This is consistent with the literature on classroom problems of student teachers (Kaldi, 2009; McDonald, 1993). Events directly related to teaching class (instructional problems and difficulties with organizing the lesson) were less frequently reported.

## Student-teachers' Coping

One lesson of each student teacher has been videotaped. Each event lasted between about ten seconds and five minutes, and consisted of, on average, eight actions of the student teacher (in total some 2,300 actions). Each action was coded on two dimensions based on Admiraal, Wubbels, & Korthagen (1996).

The first dimension of student teachers' coping – *avoidance-approach*- refers to the intensity of student teachers' cognitive and behavioral effort to control or eliminate stressors. In all types of classroom events, low scores on the avoidance-approach dimension were assigned to teacher behavior avoiding the problem in class, including silent waiting, listening to the students, looking up something in a book or cleaning the blackboard. High scores on the avoidance-approach dimension were assigned to student-teacher behavior approaching the problem in class, such as involving students in the subject matter (asking questions, inviting them to answer, and rewarding or criticizing them), and disciplining students.

The second dimension – *calmness-agitation*- refers to the degree of tension the student teacher arouses in the interaction with the students. Low scores on this second dimension were assigned to instructional and organizational behavior that student teachers used to either tackle or ignore the perceived problems. High scores on the calmness-agitation dimension were assigned to silence and disciplinary actions on the part of student teachers, which were perceived as showing a high degree of agitation in the interaction with students and a disapproving attitude towards the students. Each response was summarized with a mean score and standard deviation in scores on both dimensions, resulting in four variables ("M Approach", "SD Approach", "M Agitation", and "SD Agitation"). To check the reliability of this scoring procedure, 90 randomly selected responses were coded by a second observer, which resulted in an agreement in scores of 84 per cent.

## Analyses

In order to develop a typology of student teachers' coping responses to a stressful classroom event, we used cluster analysis with the four scores on both coping dimensions: "M Approach", "SD Approach", "M Agitation", and "SD Agitation". We decided to use the (squared) Euclidean distance as the similarity measure and a combination of a hierarchical method and optimization method as clustering method (see for an overview of clustering methods Everitt, Landau, Leese, Stahl, 2011). All 11 combinations of similarity measures and clustering methods available in SPSS 25 were evaluated. In order to ascertain the optimal cluster analysis for our data, we used the Variance Ratio Criterion (VRC, see Calinski & Harabasz, 1974). This criterion refers to the ratio of the 'within variance' (variance explained by the clusters) and 'between variance', corrected for the number of clusters and responses. All methods with the squared Euclidean distance had higher VRC values, compared to the methods with Euclidean distance. In Figure 1, we present the VRC values for each method with the squared Euclidean distance for a maximum of 20 clusters. As the

single linkage and complete linkage method have the same results with Euclidean distance and squared Euclidean distance, these methods are not included in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows two methods ('Ward' and 'Average linkage within groups') generally yielded the best results. When the number of cluster is low, the difference between both methods was insignificant; In the case of eight clusters or more, the Ward-method gave the best results. Based on this information we decided to use a typology into four types of responses attained by the 'Average linkage within groups'-method. In order to increase the proportion variance explained by this clustering, we used the optimization method 'nearest centroid sorting' with the mean scores of the four clusters of responses. In the end, the typology with four types of responses explained 49 percent of the total variance, varying from 34 percent in "SD Approach" to 61 percent in "M Agitation".

In order to evaluate the reliability of the typology, we compared the typology into four clusters with a typology based on 50 percent of the data, which was randomly chosen. Therefore, we used the Rand measure corrected for chance (Morey & Agresti, 1984). The value of the Rand measure and corrected Rand measure was .90 and .77, respectively, which met the commonly applied norm of .70.

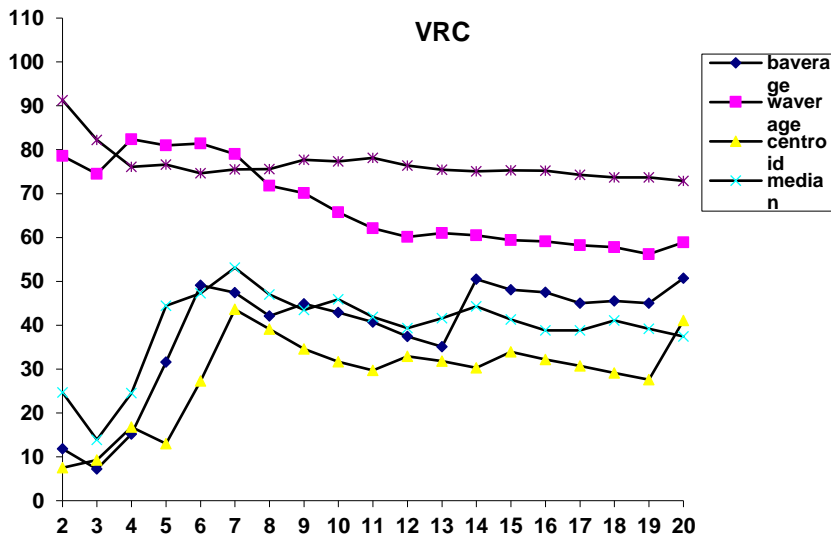


Figure 1. The values of the VRC of the five method using the squared Euclidean distance for a maximum of 20 clusters (bavera = "average linkage between groups"; waver = "average linkage within groups").

## Typology of Coping Responses

In Table 2, we present the mean scores on "M Approach", "SD Approach", "M Agitation", and "SD Agitation" for each type. In the description of the typology, we also used other information, such as extreme scores on both coping dimensions, the number of actions within each response, the duration of responses, and the subjects' perceptions on their responses as stated in the interviews.

Table 2. Mean scores on the two coping dimensions for each type of coping responses

Type	Label	M Approach	M Agitation	SD Approach	SD Agitation
Type 1 (n=127)	Varying	0.17	-0.23	0.85	0.93
	Hesitating	-0.21	0.56	0.91	0.95
Type 2 (n=101)	Problem solving	0.84	-0.60	0.11	0.03
	Avoiding	-0.75	-0.62	0.16	0.22
Type 3 (n=30)					
Type 4 (n=41)					

Between brackets the number of coping responses in each type.

In Figure2, we graphically present the cluster centres of each of the four types.

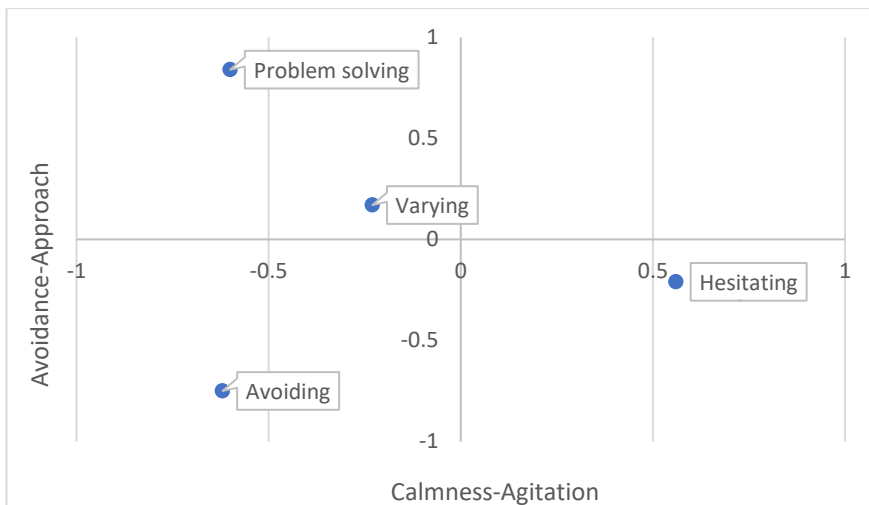


Figure 2. Cluster centres of the four types of coping.

### Type 1: Varying (N= 127)

This type of coping response was characterized by average mean scores on both dimensions and relatively high standard deviations. This means student teachers combined problem-focused actions and teaching activities ignoring the problematic classroom event. Student teachers' coping actions mostly included a combination of disciplinary actions, waiting, instructing, asking questions and inviting students to

respond. In general, these responses were relatively long and related to almost all kinds of classroom events.

The following statements of the participants in our study were typical for this kind of responses.

They [the students] had to complete these assignments on their own and I had to say a couple times “come on, can it be more quiet please, I want to have it calmer please”. I had to say this two or three times. Meanwhile, I answered some questions and helped some kids. [student teacher 7; event 8]

And:

Testing the kids’ homework, I constantly looked over my shoulder, as there was something happening behind my back. And I felt that there was. Actually, it was not necessary, but each time I looked whether the class was disciplined enough. I think this was caused by the previous lessons in which they made a racket ... And now I thought, well I just check the kids now and then. [student teacher 6; event 2]

Sometimes, teachers used the alternation of interventions and instruction more intentionally.

I remember that I waited long before class was quiet. I just hung around a little ... The kids had to ‘start up’. So, I gave them the time to take their places, to get their things, and for me as well ... Then I tried to calm them down. [student teacher 12; event 1]

Another teacher tried to restore discipline in class by intervening indirectly. This can be illustrated by teacher’s statements on restoring class discipline by giving an assignment about the subject:

I just thought let me tell them a little story to get their attention, to calm them down ... They needed a change of subject ... With telling them a story I wanted to solve the discipline problems, I wanted to calm them down, to get their attention. [student teacher 12; event 10]

Because telling students a nice story did not work to calm them down, the teacher used corrections as well. Another example of intervening indirectly is a teacher who wanted some students to listen by asking another student to repeat his answer:

*It was not that I could not hear him, actually I did. But in order to keep the others quiet, I asked him to repeat his answer: “Sorry, I cannot hear you”. I said it to the wrong kid, but I hoped it was a hint for the others. Something like, you have to be quiet, otherwise we all cannot hear anything. [student teacher 12; event 9]*

This student teacher also used corrections besides this kind of intervening indirectly. The variety in coping actions may also be caused by the fact that the participants appraised the event differently at various moments in class. The following statement about two students who wanted to sit in the front of class illustrates this.



At that moment, I thought “Well so what. Just let them sit in the front, they will be on video and that is what they want”. I thought “what does it matter” ... Then I said “but you have to keep quiet at this place”. Then I thought “Shit, they want to sit here to have a good time”. So I had to let them know, it is okay when you want to sit here, but not be a pest. So, I warned them.” [student teacher 10; event 2]

In some cases, the variety in coping actions was a result the teacher’s uncertainty of how to respond. An example is the event that a student teacher wanted to correct some students during testing homework:

*Then there was some noise at my left side, some students were disturbing and I was testing another student ... So, I had to split my attention: I had to watch these students and I was checking the answer the other student had given. So, I let the student read the question again, but I had to interrupt the kid a couple of times, because the others were so disturbing ... I just had the feeling, well what do I have do now, how can I tackle this problem. Either I do no pay attention to that kid [who was giving an answer] or I take a firm line with the two boys [who were annoying]. I was just undecided ... There were various things going round and round my head: like, just wait, when do I have to say something. Right at the moment should I say something? No, because I do not want to interrupt that boy [who was answering the question]. [student teacher 7; event 9].*

## **Type 2: Hesitating (N= 101)**

This type of coping response was characterized by high mean scores on Agitation and average mean scores on Approach-Avoidance. Both standard deviations were quite high. This means student teachers hesitated to either approach or avoid the classroom event, arousing at the same time tension in the relationship with students. Student teachers’ coping actions mostly included listening, waiting, and short disciplinary actions in an unfriendly way. This type of coping included quite long response and was especially related to the classroom events with misbehavior of the whole class.

An example is a teacher who was testing the reading of a student. The student did no know where to start her reading and then was not clearly audible.

*Well, I was really hesitating, what do I have to do now. Shall I knock the hell out of her, or shall I be somewhat more accommodating. In the end, I chose the latter, but I felt uneasy about it ... I was really getting enraged here. [student teachers 11; event 6]*

Hesitating is also a important part of the next example of a teacher in a problematic classroom event. The teacher wanted to move a student to another place in the class following constant talking. The teacher was uncertain whether the student would go.

*Oh yes, at this moment I thought “well he keeps staying there, I hope he will move”... In the end I was convinced that he would go. Still it was running through my mind, “but what if he stays. Then I have to do something else, I have to lay another penalty on him. Then he will be moving.” [student teacher 13; event 7]*

Hesitating about the way a teacher had to respond and being annoyed about the whole situation is also typical in the following example. A teacher had moved a student, because of constant talking. The teacher was holding back from intervening, because she hesitated whether the student will be moving to the right place, whether it was a correct thing to do, and whether the new place was a good choice.

*On the one hand, hesitation, on the other I was determined, she has to go whether she wants or not. At the same time, you realize this can have negative consequences for the rest of the class. I mean, she [the student who was moved] won't be more quiet at that place. I knew that beforehand. ... However, when I had let her stay at her place, that would not be a success either. You have to choose the lesser of two evils. At that moment, I just chose to move her, because I knew that she thought this is worse than staying near her girlfriend. [student teacher 11; event 4]*

The last assertion also reflects the unfriendly attitude of the teacher with regard to the students who caused the classroom problem. This type of coping response reflected inconsistent teacher behavior that was mostly caused by feelings of uncertainty how to tackle the problem. In some cases, the teacher was aware of this inconsistency, like a teacher response to a funny remark of a student:

*That is difficult in this class. Those remarks, I cannot give up laughing about it. I was a little angry because of the situation before, and then, a student makes a funny remark and I have to laugh. I know that I should not do that. I found this awful because I made myself look a fool. On the one hand, I wanted to be angry as the kids did not pay attention. But when one makes a funny remark, well I thought this is a funny, you know. I think you may laugh about it. But when you want to be mad and you try to make clear that things can't go on like this. That is very annoying." [student teacher 8; event 3]*

Sometimes uncertainty about how to respond to classroom problems had a more serious character and some severe consequences, like in the case of the following student teacher. The event occurred during a practicum of two hours. During a break, some students had smoked a cigarette, which was not allowed following the school rules. The amanuensis had made a remark about this and stated that they would not get their tea in class [something the student teacher did every week]. After the students entered class, the students defended themselves and they wanted to have their tea. The student teacher responded:

*I thought, it is already hard to work with this group, I am responsible for the remainder of the lesson, so I made the best of a bad job, to restore a working class climate, by allowing them to have their tea. I had to go on and that was not possible by the move of the amanuensis ... I thought I have some boys who were mad, not at me, but at him. And they harassed me with questions and remarks and I was not able to react on that. I thought just give them their tea, then I have solved it ... I got into a panic. I thought those boys are full of bullshit and I do not know what to say. To get it over and go on with class,*

*I thought I better can give them their tea. It drove me to distraction, what do I have to do now. [student teacher 8; event 11]*

In general, this type of coping response occurred mostly when teachers wanted to start their lesson and the student were still restless. Typical was the start of the class of the following student teacher:

*Then I already became somewhat more irritated. Like, “be quite now, I want to have it quiet now”. I always try a couple times in a friendly way. But, at some stage I want it to have it quiet. And this was a moment like that. “So, you have to be quiet immediately!” [student teacher 13; event 2]*

Or a student teacher who was uncertain whether he would be effective in restoring class discipline at the start of his lesson:

*At that moment I thought “will I be successful?”. I don’t have a loud voice. I mean, most of the times they cannot hear me ... And I did not want to shout. So, I walked up to some kids hoping that this would help now and then, that they were getting more disciplined. At this moment, I thought, well, “will I be successful or not?” [student teacher 11; event 2]*

### **Type 3: Problem Solving (N= 30)**

This type of coping was characterized by high mean scores on both dimensions and low standard deviations. Generally, it refers to short disciplinary actions with a combination of inviting, checking and criticizing students and listening to their response. This type of coping was relatively more related to classroom events dealing with difficulties in organizing class.

The following example was a student teacher who paid attention to the way she invited students to give answers, tested their homework or gave a reading assignment.

*What I found irritating was that I constantly said “Do you want to do this, can you do that?” I was pointed out not do that this way. The class can also say we do not want that, or we cannot do that. They just have to do it. That was my goal, just say “Take you books, do this, do that, do you know the answer” in stead of “Do you want to give an answer?”. During teaching, I noticed that I was doing it again, especially during testing the homework. I think I have to change that. So, I felt this was irritating ... Do you see it? At that moment I thought, “Shit again, I do again”... It could be that class picks this up. Although class was disciplined this time.” [student teacher 2 event 3]*

This student teacher was aware of what she was doing and she corrected it immediately. Another example of a teacher, now in combination with students’ on-task behavior:

*That is Charlotte, a chatterbox and not so smart either. Well I heard her work because she was chattering again ... Then she did not know where to start and she did it wrong*

*three times. I thought, well okay that is the consequence of chattering and not paying attention. And I just let her know that. I just thought I made you look like a fool for the whole class. [student teacher 19; event 8]*

#### **Or the next assertion as a response on students' criticism:**

*Then I had to think of who is going to write on the blackboard. And he [a student] then said this is already the third time I have to do that! I just started and normally I would maybe ask another student, but now I thought "No way, you have to do it again. Just come to the blackboard." [student teacher 25; event 11]*

The common aspect in the type of coping response were the short length of each response and the high efficacy teachers felt and sometimes also showed in their response to the classroom problems. The term 'problem solving' of the label of this type of coping refers to recovering the (slight) imbalance in classroom routines, and not only to disciplinary actions. Most of the times there was a short moment student teachers felt uncertain and they immediately reacted with confidence.

#### **Type 4: Avoiding (N= 41)**

This type of coping was characterized low mean scores and low standard deviations on both dimensions. Generally, student teachers continued their teaching (instruction, arranging the classroom environment, and organizing class) and ignored the classroom problem. In general, this type of coping included long responses and was related to all classroom events, but relatively more to events dealing with particular on-task behavior of students, such as a comment or a question.

In general, this type of coping was characterized by avoiding or neglecting the (possible) classroom problem as the following assertion of a student teacher shows.

*This is a situation I intentionally avoid. I am just convinced that I should no pay any attention to this kind of events. Here, two girls are coming in late. Just greeting. Yes, and then that boy is coming in. He said sorry, I am late. I thought, this is okay. So, just going on with the lesson. [student teacher 12; event 2]*

This statement shows that the teacher not only paid almost no attention to the classroom problem, it did not aroused her as well. This is somewhat different in the next example. This student teacher did no pay much attention to the problem in his response to the class, but the problem did aroused him. It was about some students asking for their test results:

*It was about their test results. I had planned to present them tomorrow. First Claudia [a student] was asking for her results. I gave her these. Then Anouk [another student] asked for it, which was already irritating. Then I though now I have to watch out, before you know the whole class yells for results. So I tried to neglect her and the class by walking around a little and helped the students with questions. In the meanwhile, I gave every kid his test result." [student teacher 17; event 9]*

In general, this of coping was relatively more related to on-task-behavior of students, often in terms students asking questions about the subject of the lesson. In the next example, the teacher behavior is similar as in the other examples (answering questions and continuing instruction), but the appraisal of the event was slightly different: The student teacher selected this event as a minor classroom problem.

*Well, the moment I want to select were some questions from the group. Most of the times these questions are unexpected. You never know what they will be asking and what kind of things they do not get. Sometimes I myself think that has to be clear ... So I knew this time that it was a hard subject to cover in the lesson. I thought there will be some questions at different levels: Sometimes questions with which I had problems to know the answer; and sometimes questions of which I thought I told it you three times already. [student teacher 20; event 9]*

This student teacher answered the questions and continued her instruction. She selected this classroom event because she did not know what to expect from class. These thoughts were running through her head during the event. In the next example, the student teacher was showing similar behavior (which was thus clustered into this type of coping), but his cognitions were different. He was particularly thinking of how to answer the questions and how to explain and illustrate the subject or, with other words, about his own actions instead of the (possible) responses from class.

*There were some kids who had problems with the assignments. I had to explain it extensively. Although it went well, it took me a lot of energy. I had to verify which students were going well, who not. The former group did not need much attention; the latter the more. I had to listen well what the student did not understand and I had to check the whole class how they were working on the assignments.. And then there was Guido, a student who always asks a lot. He asked so much attention that I shut me off from the class. I had to listen what is the problem, which steps are unclear. How do I have to formulate my answer ... [student teacher 21; event 9]*

The examples above were related to on-task behavior of the students. This was not always the case. The next assertion is from a student teacher (French language) who wanted to sing with the whole class some French songs. But the class was (unexpectedly) not very motivated to co-operate.

*I thought after that assignment, "Let's sing some songs". They always find that amusing. And I wanted to complete the lesson with something like this. But I was disappointed. They were not singing, they were just chattering. I tried a couple of times, but it did not work ... I was thinking, "Well then I stop, I do it for them". But as soon I stopped, they were quiet and wanted to sing after all. [student teacher 23; event 9]*

The common aspect of this type of coping was avoiding the particular problem and continuing the daily routines of teaching in terms of instructing, explaining, organizing, arranging materials, and so on. In general, the classroom problems were small problems, which took not much energy from the student teacher. Because the

responses were continuations of the teaching, the start and finish of the (long) responses were difficult to determine.

## Discussion

A typology of responses have been developed of the way student teachers cope with stressful classroom events. Based on video-recordings of particular classroom events and stimulated-recall interviews in which student teachers explained their appraisal of the event and their behavior, four types of coping response have been identified. The first type of coping response, *Varying*, included a combination of intervention tactics of the student teacher and the continuation of instruction. Most of the time this combination of teacher actions was intentionally put into practice. The second type of coping response, *Hesitating*, referred to a combination of waiting and disciplinary actions in a unfriendly way. The term “fighting” or “anti-social”, sometimes used in the coping literature, could apply to this type of coping. Most of the time, the student teachers were uncertain about their actions and the effects of their actions. The third type of coping responses, *Problem-solving*, included short actions of the student teacher focused on restoring a slight imbalance in classroom routines, mostly related to the organization of class. In general, student teacher were quite confident about their actions. The fourth type of coping response, *Avoiding*, referred to instruction, answering questions, arranging materials, organizing class as part of the daily routine of teaching, all intentionnaly not focused on directly solving the problematic classroom event. In general, the classroom events were small problems and teachers felt relatively confident about their actions.

These four types of coping response can be positioned on one dimension commony distinguished in the coping literature: approach-avoidance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). One type (Problem solving) is positioned relatively high on approach, two types (Varying and Hestitating) scored in the middle and the fourth type (Avoiding) is placed relatively high on Avoidance. Both more extreme types (Problem solving and Avoidance) represented the least frequently applied coping response. This finding adds to previous research on student-teachers' coping, which reported that student teachers focussed on either avoidance strategies (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019) or problem soving strategies through searching for help of supervisor, mentor of co-operating teacher (Murray-Harvey, 2001; Pillet et al., 2013). In the current study, student teachers mostly applied a combination of approaching and avoiding the particular stressful events, either intentionally and carried out with confidence (Varying) or unintentionally and showing their agitation (Hesitating). Especially the latter type of coping might be related to the student-teachers' transformation from learner-teacher to beginning teacher.

## Implications for Teacher Education

In general, only Hesitating responses led to negative feelings of student teachers about the way they had coped with the particular classroom event. They not only



wanted to perform more approach coping, they also recognized negative effects on the learning climate in class. They thought if they would have shown more approaching behavior and less agitation, the particular classroom event (mostly consisting of disciplinary problems) would have been solved faster and that the class climate would have been less negatively influenced. In other words, some student-teachers from this study wanted to learn how to move beyond showing agitation and develop more effective problem-solving behavior. They would like to develop from coping to managing as Hong, Day, & Greene (2018) examined. These authors presented the stories of six student teachers, based on interviews during three years (final year of teacher education and first two years as beginning teachers) showing three patterns of dealing with challenges in teaching: 1) from coping to managing (four teachers), 2) from managing to coping (one teacher) and 3) continuously coping (one teacher). The authors described coping as emotion-focused behavior without resolving the challenges and managing as overcoming or resolving the challenges. The four participants who moved from coping to managing mentioned strong support from their colleagues and administrators echoing the importance of building a supportive, encouraging and collaborative community, either during teacher education or as inservice teachers in school. The importance of support from supervisor, mentor or co-operating teachers in coping with challenges in teaching is confirmed in research on student-teachers' experiences with the STP (Lindqvist et al., 2019; Murray-Harvey, 2001; Pillen et al., 2013). In addition, student teachers might also be prepared to apply more effective or satisfying coping responses to problematic classroom events and acquire better classroom management skills (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). For example, practicing more approach coping instead of avoidance coping in simulations, role-play or micro teaching might be a way to prepare student teachers on the actual teaching practice. Their peers as well as expert teachers could model activities of approach-coping responses.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Although we could include more than 300 stressful classroom events and coping response, only 27 student teachers of one university teacher education program in the Netherlands participated. A variety of classroom events and coping responses were studied, but the low number of participants can have consequences for the generalization of the findings to other student teachers in other teacher education programs. Additional research with other groups of student teachers as well as with beginning teachers would be welcome. Including beginning teachers or carrying out longitudinal research with participants during their STP as well as during their first years as beginning teachers will enable comparisons of coping responses in different stages of the teaching career leading to a variety of implications for teacher education as well as for teachers' professional development and supporting school structures.

## Conclusion

Practice shock, or the transition from learner to professional, is not limited to the teaching profession. Many professions, including physicians, nurse, lawyers and social workers have their own descriptions of troublesome first encounters with work. The four types of coping responses with stressful classroom events identified in the current study, Varying, Hestitating, Problem solving en Avoiding, can be positioned on the two dimensions Approach-Avoidance and Calmness-Agitation. More focus on dealing with classroom events in teacher education, especially during mentoring and supervising the STP, might help student teachers to develop more effective classroom management skills and to make direct interaction with students a source of greater job satisfaction.

## References

- [1] Admiraal, W. F., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Wubbels, T. (2000). Effects of student teachers' coping behaviour. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 33-52
- [2] Admiraal, W. F., Wubbels, T., & Korthagen, F. A. J. (1996b). Student teacher behaviour in response to daily hassles in the classroom. *Social Psychology of Education*, 1, 25-46.
- [3] Blase, J. J. (1986). A qualitative analysis of sources of teacher stress: Consequences for performance. *American Educational Research Journal*, 23, 13-40.
- [4] Caires, S., Almeida, L., Vieira, D. (2012). Becoming a teacher: student teachers' experiences and perceptions about teaching practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 163-178.
- [5] Calinski, T., & Harabasz, J. (1974). A dendrite method for cluster analysis. *Communications in Statistics*, 3, 1-27.
- [6] Dicke, T., Elling, J., Schmeck, A., & Leutner, D. (2015). Reducing reality shock: The effects of classroom management skills training on beginning teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 48, 1–12.
- [7] Ding, M., Li, Y., Li, X., & Kulm, G. (2010). Chinese teachers' attributions and coping strategies for student classroom misbehavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 30, 321-337.
- [8] Ding, A-C, & Wang, H-H. (2018). Unpacking teacher candidates' decision-making and justifications in dilemmatic spaces during the student teaching year. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 46, 221-238.
- [9] Everitt, B. S., Landau, S., Leese, M., & Stahl, D. (2011). *Cluster analysis* (5th ed.). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- [10] Gustems-Carnicer, J., Calderón, C., & Calderón-Garrido, D. (2019). Stress, coping strategies and academic achievement in teacher education students. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 42, 375-390.



- [11] Hong, J., Day, C., & Greene, B. (2018) The construction of early career teachers' identities: coping or managing? *Teacher Development*, 22, 249-266.
- [12] Kaldi, S. (2009). Student teachers' perceptions of self-competence in and emotions/stress about teaching in initial teacher education. *Educational Studies*, 35, 349-360.
- [13] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- [14] Lewis, R., Romi, S., Qui, X., & Katz, Y. (2005). Teachers' classroom discipline and student misbehavior in Australia, China and Israel. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 729-741.
- [15] Lindqvist, H., Weurlander, M., Wernerson, A., & Thornberg, R. (2019). Conflicts viewed through the micro-political lens: beginning teachers' coping strategies for emotionally challenging situations. *Research Papers in Education*.
- [16] MacDonald, C. J. (1993). Coping with stress during the teaching practicum: The student teacher's perspective. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 39, 407-418.
- [17] Malderez, A., Hobson, A.J., Tracey, L., & Kerr, K. (2007). Becoming a student teacher: Core features of the experience. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 30, 225-48.
- [18] Morey, L. C., & Agresti, A. (1984). The measurement of classification agreement: an adjustment to the Rand statistic for chance agreement. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 44, 33-37.
- [19] Murray-Harvey, R. (2001). How teacher education students cope with practicum concerns. *The Teacher Educator*, 37, 117-132
- [20] Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., & Brok, P. den. (2013). Tensions in beginning teachers' professional identity development, accompanying feelings and coping strategies. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 36, 240-260.

# Understanding Students' Resistance to Autonomous Learning in an L2 English Language Course at a University in Lebanon

Khairallah, M.

Fleonova, O.

Nicolas, M. O.

## Abstract

This qualitative research investigates students' resistance to autonomous learning activities in an English language course at a university in Lebanon. Data was gathered across four sections of English 101 based on observations of 68 students, focus group discussions and two teachers' reflective diaries. Thematic analysis yielded that students showed signs of resistance during collaborative learning, metacognitive activities, and the evaluation process. The students were also unwilling to independently use available language learning resources. The data suggested that the possible causes of resistance lay in the mismatches between students' expectations and the course design, the learning cultures that the students bring to the classroom, and students' perceptions of the place English holds both at the university and in their lives. This study reveals that expressions of resistance during classroom interactions resonate with the complex and layered nature of English language learning.

**Keywords:** learner autonomy, resistance to autonomous learning, English language teaching in Lebanon, learning cultures, second language learning

## 1. Introduction

Autonomy has become an important attribute of the 21st century learner who is expected to be prepared for the fast-changing requirements and challenges of academic and professional life. Research in the teaching of English in L2 classrooms shows a relationship between students' language learning proficiency and autonomous learning (Balçikanlı, 2010; Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Chik, Aoki, & Smith 2018; Dafei, 2007; Garcia-Carbonell, Rising, Montero, & Watts, 2001; Harmer, 2001; Nunan, 1997; Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, & Bielak, 2017; Po-Ying, 2007; Schormová, 2017). The practical applications for fostering autonomy in the classroom lie in adopting teaching methodologies promoting active learning and redesigning syllabi and assessment models in accordance with the principles of autonomy (Balçikanlı, 2008; Weimer,

2013). Classroom practice, however, shows that learners are not always able or prepared to embrace a greater responsibility for their own learning. Many studies in the L2 tertiary classroom reflect different moments of tension or resistance when active methodologies that promote autonomy are introduced (Bloom, 2007; Canagarajah, 1993; Jing, 2006; Miller & Zuengler, 2011; Stover & Holland, 2018; Walton, 2011).

More context-specific qualitative studies that explore the complexities of such related concepts as autonomy, self-regulation, self-access learning, self-direction and language learning strategies are encouraged (Rose, 2012). This study explores the manifestations and possible causes of learners' resistance to autonomous learning in an English course at a university in Lebanon. In order to better understand the complexity of resistance, this qualitative research is designed around the following research questions:

How does student resistance to autonomous learning manifest in the classroom?

What are the possible causes of student resistance to autonomy in a language classroom?

## **2. Literature Review**

Autonomy and resistance in language learning

### *2.1.1 Autonomy in L2 classrooms*

The concept of autonomous learning in language classrooms has evolved since the mid-1970s. The most widely quoted definition of autonomy is the 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981, 3). It was soon realized that Holec's definition could not be applied to all learning situations, and learners could not be decision makers in all the areas of the learning process, as initially suggested, such as determining the objectives, content, methods, pace and time, and evaluation of their learning (Smith, 2008). Since the early 1990s learner autonomy has increasingly become a part of classroom pedagogy. In the classroom setting, as a social context for learning, teachers play a supportive role aiding students in the development of that skill (Benson, 2001, 2006). This form of socially mediated interdependent learning (Little, 2003) fosters learner autonomy both as a psychological attribute and practical ability. Through guidance toward autonomy the students develop 'a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person' (Dam et al., as cited in Smith, 2008, 396). This definition comes closest to how autonomy is understood in this study.

In language teaching, autonomy has become an intrinsic element in learner-centered approaches (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Little, Ridley & Ushioda, 2003; Nunan, 1997; Weimer, 2013) where students take on a more active role in their learning; students collaborate to participate in task based activities, for example, simulations (Crookall & Oxford, 1990; Jones, 1982; 1995; Sallies, 2002; Schormová, 2017); they

develop their own language learning strategies (Oxford, 2017); they employ technologies and explore digital practices to develop their capacity to take control of their own learning trajectories (Chik, 2018, Jones, 2018); they critically reflect on their learning and engage in self-assessment activities (Little, 2005). The teacher's role changes from an authoritative provider of information to a facilitator and guide (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2001).

Many scholars warn that concerns about developing strategies for learner autonomy should not overshadow broader critical-political concerns, or larger social and educational goals of autonomy (Benson 1997, 2009; Holliday, 2003; Pennycook, 1997). Shmenck (2005) argues that the cultural aspects of the term need to be given serious consideration and cautions that educators run the risk of 'cultural blindness' if they neglect the specific cultural situations where autonomous learning is introduced. Autonomous learning is not a neutral process but one that is embedded in power issues within the classroom setting and the broader social context (Benson, 1997, 2009; Oxford, 2003; Pennycook, 1997; Shmenck, 2005).

### *Resistance to change*

Students' acceptance of innovations in classroom methodology is usually taken for granted by course designers. However, students might resist teaching innovations when the change requires that they readjust their perceptions of learning and of the roles teachers and students play in the process (Keeney-Kennicutt, Gunersel & Simpson, 2008; Stover & Holland, 2018; Walton, 2011). Students often enact resistance to change in their learning environments, either overtly or in less direct ways. Researchers describe learner resistance as *opposition, oppositional behaviors, oppositional attitudes, tension, or reluctance* (Bloom, 2007; Canagarajah, 1993; Jing, 2006; Miller & Zuengler, 2011; Stover & Holland, 2018; Walton, 2011). English language classrooms are 'potential sites of resistance as complex language and cultural ideologies come together and often result in conflict' (Miller & Zuengler, 2011,133). Specific occurrences of resistance include making the classroom disorderly through interruptions, challenges and disagreements, feigning misunderstanding of what is required of them, 'forgetting' to complete or turn in an assignment, 'playing dumb', rolling eyes, emotional outbursts, bargaining, or even boycotting English classes as a response to innovation in classroom methodology (Blidi, 2017; Miller & Zuengler, 2011; Shamim, 1996; Vetter, Reynolds, Beane, Roquemore, Rorrer & Shepherd-Allred, 2012; Walton, 2011). Resistance can occur because of differing definitions and visions of the learning process.

A number of studies explore various causes of learner resistance to autonomy-oriented classroom methodologies. One such cause is the mismatch between the course expectations and the students' expectation of language learning. While the course might prioritize and emphasize process learning, learning strategy training, reflective learning, metacognitive learning, and co-construction of knowledge during collaborative work, students might be oriented towards tangible language

achievements important in traditional assessment and product-oriented educational contexts (Canagarajah, 1993; Jing, 2006; Little, 2003). In Tsang's study (as cited in Jing, 2006, 97) students 'did not ask for autonomy but for the acquisition of particular language skills' to see tangible short-term results and 'they did not see the gaining of autonomy as relating to their progress towards their learning goal'. Interpersonal problems and imbalances of responsibilities during group work can also lead to students' skepticism and resentment (Hill, 2009; Jung & Levitin, 2002). The methodology itself, like for example simulations, might not be perceived by some students as 'serious learning' and might provoke students' mistrust and resistance (Hill, 2009; Jung & Levitin, 2002). Although some students realize the importance of English for their lives they often see little relevance of a language course other than satisfying the academic requirements of the institution (Canagarajah, 1993; Jing, 2006).

Student unpreparedness for autonomous learning might be a result of previous educational experiences (Balçikanli, 2008). Years of teacher-centered instruction have produced students who have 'little or no commitment to learning ... unable to function without structure and imposed control' (Weimer, 2013, 146). The situation results in teachers perpetuating the cycle of passivity by continuing to create and teach courses that suit students who are used to inactivity. Because of previous educational experience learners believe that 'a highly teacher-directed approach is the way education should happen' and 'are simply not aware of the power they possess as learners' (Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994, 91). Weimer (2013) provides some common sources of student resistance during the transition from the so-called traditional classroom to a more active one: reluctance to do more work which learner-centered approaches require; fear of being outside their comfort zone; feeling threatened by unfamiliar tasks and expectations. Successful in the other learning paradigm, students might perceive a threat to their academic achievements; overall, 'classrooms where teachers make all the decisions are safer, simpler places' (Weimer, 2013, 204).

The cultural context in which learning takes place can afford or constrain the fostering of autonomy (Blidi, 2017; Cortazi & Jin, 1997, 2013; Jin & Cortazzi, 2017; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). The authority structures of the community outside the classroom might influence students' cultures of learning and lead to the acceptance or rejection of innovations in autonomy-oriented classroom (Shamim, 1996). Resistance to autonomy might also be determined by the institutional context (Blidi, 2017; Stover & Holland, 2018; Tolman & Kremling, 2017). Resistance to autonomy in English language classrooms might stem from issues of power of English as an international language and a language of dominance (Pennycook, 1997).

## *2.2 Language Learning in the Lebanese Context*

A Lebanese student is a product of complex cultural, religious and socio-political factors (Bacha & Bahous, 2011; Zakharia, 2011). Although Arabic is the mother

tongue and the official language of the country, the foreign languages of English and French coexist with Arabic in daily interactions and importantly in the educational sector. The majority of the population is bilingual or even tri-lingual. For a few decades French and Arabic were the official languages as a result of the French Mandate over the country from 1920-1943. Since the 1990s, with the internationalization of education, English has decidedly become the lingua franca of Lebanese tertiary level education (Annous, Nicolas & Townsend, 2017; Gill & Kirkpatrick, 2013) with around 30 universities using English as the medium of instruction (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2016).

Students entering the university come from a wide array of schools from government-supported public schools to privately owned self-managed religious or secular schools, either with English-Arabic or French-Arabic medium of instruction. The learning culture in both 'is characterized by the dominance of teacher-centered teaching approaches' (Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, 2006, 17). As a result, in general, most students have been trained in rote learning (Daouk, Bahous & Bacha, 2016). The official exit examination required by the Ministry of Education for all Lebanese high school students, the Lebanese Baccalaureate, compels students to memorize vast amounts of content in order to successfully pass the exam (Akar, 2012). The complex culture that learning English brings into the Lebanese classroom is rarely discussed, and further studies of resistance in the classroom need to take these complexities into consideration.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This exploratory qualitative study investigated students' resistance to autonomous learning activities using three methods of data collection:

**Unstructured Observation:** The two non-participant observers from outside the English Department observed for one to two hours per week over the 15 weeks. They kept observation notes on all classroom interactions that dealt with autonomous activities, group work and debriefing reflection sessions. The observers recorded any classroom interaction or discussion without any foreseen or structured criteria, but they were particularly focusing on instances of resistance to autonomous activities. The excerpts from observations are labelled 10N for Observer One and 20N for Observer Two with the observation number following, for example 10N16.

**Teachers' Diaries:** The two teacher-researchers kept record of each class session over the 15 weeks. They took brief notes during the class time and then spent 20 minutes after each class recording verbal and non-verbal student behavior. They also re-called excerpts of student-student, students-teacher, students-teacher-class conversations that dealt with autonomous activities. Once the classroom interactions were noted, they reflected on each session (Maharaj, 2016) noting down their thoughts, feeling, impressions and insights. The excerpts from the teachers' diaries are labelled 1TD for

Teacher One and 2TD for Teacher Two with the class session number following, for example 2TD26.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Students of the four sections voiced their position during a focused discussion at the end of the semester in which they reflected on their progress in the course, on their perceptions of autonomy and their interpretations of the possible causes of resistance. Students were divided into 4 groups of 4-5 students per section. The observers recorded the interactions of the group, while the teachers facilitated the discussion. Students' quotes from the focused group discussions are labelled according to the student participant who was assigned a number, for example FGS13.

### *3.1 Context and Participants*

This study took place in a private university in Lebanon where English is the medium of instruction. The observed classes had between fifteen and eighteen students each; sixty-eight in total. The students were roughly divided between male and female. The students were either bilingual (English-Arabic) or trilingual (English-Arabic-French). Students had been informed about the research at the beginning of the semester, consent letters were signed and permission to conduct the research was granted.

English 101 required a shift from a teacher and textbook centered classroom to an active learning environment that demanded self-motivated autonomous learners capable of working in cooperating teams and engaging in simulation activities, reflective learning and metacognitive development. This active methodology was made explicit in the syllabus, which stated, 'Through individual and collaborative work, students in English 101 are expected to become responsible autonomous learners who can find their own strategies for learning.'

### *3.2 Data Analysis*

A thematic analysis was carried out through an iterative process. The researchers reviewed, sorted, reflected on and coded the collected data from the diaries and observations first individually and then collaboratively. Representative quotes were selected. Together they coded the focus group discussion and triangulated the data from the three sources (Creswell, 2007). The emergent themes from this research were grounded both empirically (from the data) and conceptually (from the analytical frameworks as outlined in the literature review) (Williams, 2012). The collaborative sorting and reflection on the data, as well as the triangulation of the three data sources helped to minimize researchers' biases.

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1 RQ 1: Manifestations of resistance to autonomous learning*

Four themes emerged from the three data sources that helped to answer to the first research question: *How does student resistance to autonomous learning manifest in the classroom?* They are: resistance to collaborative learning, unwillingness to



independently use available language learning resources, resistance to metacognitive activities and resistance to the evaluation process.

#### *4.1.1. Resistance to collaborative learning*

Collaborative work is an intrinsic part of autonomous learning training. The teachers of English 101 considered teamwork an important strategy for minimizing student dependence on the teacher and promoting active participation in one's learning through peer co-construction of knowledge. This strategy minimizes excessive or even exclusive reliance on the teacher as well as forges real life intragroup relationships, conflicts, and negotiations. The students in the study, however, often did not perceive collaboration as a learning situation.

The diary entries and observation notes recorded various instances of resistance ranging from open to passive: students' vocalizing preference to work alone; sitting silently and not participating; sending text messages instead of participating; ignoring uncooperative team-members and taking on all the group work just to finish the project; negotiating with the teacher for a better group next time, or a separate higher grade for their input; or complaining openly to the teacher about their group. One expressed social preferences wanting to work with *'the lads from his village'* (2TD18). The following email from a student shows the many reasons why students are unwilling to work in groups.

*Dear Dr. X, I wanted to tell you after class, but you were kind of busy. I know simulations are supposed to be working with other members of the group, and you don't have a choice to choose who you want to be with. However, we're still in university and I have a small request. I would like to change my group, because: Roy acts like he's in charge, Jinanne is always texting and I can't understand anything Raji says. This is supposed to be an English project, but every time I speak in English, they change it to Arabic. We are getting graded for that and I don't want to lose points for their lack of English. Thank you, Student Jessica (1TD14).*

The observation notes are filled with examples of students needing confirmation from their teacher about their performance or their ideas rather than discussing and negotiating the final choice with the team and relying on the judgment of their peers: *'Could you check our slogans? Which one should we choose?'* (1TD15); *'Miss, whose logo do you like?'* (2TD13). The effort of negotiation with teammates seemed to be unfamiliar or burdensome and students found difficulty connecting their collaboration efforts to their language development.

#### *4.1.2. Resistance to independent use of available language learning resources*

The course syllabus included a number of learning activities to be performed outside class. Students were encouraged to use resources, such as the English Language Centre, recommended online grammar activities, and Graded Readers at the university library to improve their reading skills, vocabulary, grammar and sentence



structure skills. The Graded Readers were introduced at the beginning of the semester in the form of a guided activity, and after that students were expected to decide on their own how and when to use them. Most students soon dropped the attempt claiming that they were too busy with their major courses. While the teachers believed that such aspects of the course as vocabulary acquisition and grammar revision could be done by students at this level on their own, some students preferred teacher-prepared vocabulary lists and grammar exercises: *'Going to the library to borrow Graded Readers is not an effective way of building up vocabulary, because everybody knows we don't like to read and we won't read.'* (FGS4); *'Instead the teacher could give us a list of words we need to know to pass the course.'* (FGS47). As for grammar websites, only a small number of students, eleven out of sixty-eight (1TD, 2TD), reported in class accessing online grammar practice resources.

As part of the training for autonomous development, another activity was designed to familiarize students with how to find information in the library. The library task sheet had guiding questions. One teacher reported that a large majority of her students from the two sections returned to class with identical answers (2TD8). The incident showed that these students would rather use an 'easy opportunity' to copy from each other to complete a learning activity than exert the effort to work autonomously.

#### 4.1.3. Resistance to metacognitive activities

Throughout the course, students were involved in awareness-raising activities that focused on their responsibility for language learning: use of available resources to suit their individual needs, discussions on various learning strategies needed for language acquisition, as well as keeping portfolios with personal action plans for reflection, self-evaluation and self-monitoring of their progress in the course.

One such metacognitive activity was regular debriefing sessions with the students at the end of each module. These sessions focused on their improvement in the course and the development of their skills: collaboration, autonomy, reflective learning, understanding the importance of English for their future, and the transferability of skills to other university courses. The two observers registered that in these sessions, students showed signs of impatience waiting for their written exam grade, which was to be given at the end of the debriefing session. Some students were observed not listening to the teacher and not willing to spend time to reflect on their work. Two students interrupted one teacher with very deliberate questions such as *'What are our grades, Miss?'* (1ON16).

The students kept a portfolio to reflect on their learning which included: their production during each simulation (for example logos, slogans, etc.), student-generated vocabulary sheets, process writing assignments, students' action plans and reflections on their progress in the course and self-evaluation sheets. Last minute compilation of the required portfolio entries, or photocopied tables of contents of other students, signaled to the teachers that the value of self-reflective learning which

portfolios were meant to promote was not appreciated by some students and was perceived as an extra burden (1TD24, 2TD27).

#### *4.1.4. Resistance to the evaluation process*

In the course, the students encountered types of assessment that were unusual for them. In accordance with the course design, oral and written exams were in the form of simulations. There were no familiar vocabulary or grammar quizzes during the semester. Students' daily group work and portfolio were assessed. A student's questioned, *'When will we have a test, miss?'* (1TD23) was interpreted by the researchers as an expectation of familiar regular grammar and vocabulary quizzes. The students had to readjust to new forms of assessment, with a reduced amount of product-oriented assessment and a greater amount of language-learning-as-a process assessment.

The portfolio grade was a new type of assessment for the students. As mentioned earlier, portfolio, as a metacognitive reflective exercise and evidence of students' progress through the course, was viewed by some students as a burden. Some students complained that the portfolio was just a compilation of papers, and it was unfair that they lost points for that activity (2ON15). The students, however, became quite excited when a reflective portfolio task at the end of the semester asked them to evaluate their own language acquisition progress (1TD39). They were informed that their self-assessment would be calculated as part of the course grade. To support their grade, they had to provide evidence from their portfolio, which reflected their vocabulary and grammar skills development, as well as speaking and writing.

Another assessment strategy linked the grading rubric to students' reflections. In these reflective activities, students filled out a chart tracking the type and frequency of their grammar mistakes for each major graded assignment. The students were also asked to reflect on how or whether they developed strategies to address these weaknesses to improve their grammar. Initially, students were hostile to the rubric, which they found harsh and tried to negotiate the grading criteria. One student stated, *'Why are spelling and grammar mistakes such a big thing? Who cares? I won't need to write when I get a job.'* (2TD24). By the middle of the semester, students began to understand the rationale of this assessment strategy. One student, happy with her grade for the second written exam, remarked, *'I don't have a single run-on problem. In my first essay I had twelve! I practiced at home before the exam.'* (1TD39).

#### *4.2 RQ 2: Possible causes of resistance to autonomous learning*

One possible reason behind student resistance towards autonomous activities was identified as 'learning cultures that students bring to the classroom'. Another reason was linked to 'the perceptions of the place English 101 holds at the university and in their lives'.

#### 4.2.1. Learning cultures that students bring to class

The findings suggest that the learning cultures and experiences that students brought to the classroom clashed with the autonomous learning agenda promoted by the course. The two teachers reported in their diaries that it felt like they had to ‘force students to be autonomous’. Many students resisted a mode of learning that they perceived to be different from their understanding of what learning should be.

During the debriefing sessions, students commented on past learning experiences and their expectations on ‘what should happen in a classroom’: *‘Our education style does not encourage us to work in autonomy.’* (FGS37); *‘A student can’t work without asking a teacher what to do.’* (FGS57); *‘Students need someone to force them to study. The teacher forces students to attend lessons so students don’t miss important information.’* (FGS4). These students brought in a passive acceptance of and disengagement from the learning process where the teacher fully determined and managed the learning situation. One student explained his attitude in class by his previous learning at school: *‘Our English session in our [French] school was always a rest hour, “ntaesh al bizir” (eating sunflower seeds—an Arabic idiom for doing something insignificant.)* (2TD14).

Linked to students’ passive attitude was the perception of the role of the teacher. Some of the student statements during the debriefing sessions were: *‘The teacher is the most trusted source of information not ourselves.’* (FGS7); *‘The teacher has more experience and more accurate information.’* (FGS50). For these students, the teacher was perceived to be the sole authority and giver of knowledge (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). In a study conducted in a similar context, Fleonova and Tassone (2016) identified that rather than engaging in a search for answers, the majority of students expected and preferred ‘second-hand’ information, that is, information prepared by the teacher in a concise form conveniently packaged for memorizing and passing exams.

When teachers assume a facilitative position, they appear to be functioning in a less authoritative role. The responsibility for the construction of knowledge and skills is delegated to the students through project and collaborative work. One student revealed to one of the observers, *‘The teacher is not doing anything; we are doing everything.’* (10N16). It is a common perception that the teacher does not know how to do the job (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017), if he/she ‘assumes a less authoritarian role, expects interactive group work..., does not encourage memorization or administer achievement tests, and generally acts as if the students should be responsible for their own learning’ (Tarone & Yule, as cited in Bloom, 2007, 90).

Bacha and Bahous (2011) reported that Lebanese students are conditioned to memorize and it is the teacher who provides the students with all the content that will be on the exams. Students in our context also seemed to have brought in a culture of grade-oriented expectations and ‘learn for the test’ studying styles, and when they encountered different types of assessment focusing on process rather than product,

it caused questioning and uncertainty. After having received an assignment, students would often double-check with the teacher, 'Is it graded?' Students admitted that they did not want to put extra effort into something they did not perceive as having immediate benefit for them, *i.e.* the grade. The teachers documented in their diaries that after several days of group-work preparation for the simulation, students showed signs of unease, discomfort or uncertainty about the purpose of the activities and repeatedly asked, 'When will we have a test?'

Many students showed weaknesses when required to engage in metacognitive activities and it was not easy for them to present realistic goals in their action plans. In these action plans formulated at the beginning of the course on the basis of their diagnostic test, they were expected to reflect on their grammar and writing and design strategies to address their weaknesses. Many action plans consisted of a list of 'wishful thinking' statements, such as '*I will read more books*' (FGS59), '*I will do grammar exercises using websites*' (FGS16), and '*I will borrow books from the library*' (FGS18). At the end of the semester during the focus group sessions, they revisited their action plans and admitted that such statements did not present a realistic strategy they would follow.

Some tensions came from the mismatch between teachers' understanding of what learning is versus students' understanding of what should happen in the classroom. The students did not perceive the simulation methodology, a strategy for promoting autonomy (Schormová, 2017) as an appropriate mode of learning. In simulation-based language courses the responsibility for tasks and projects, researching roles, selection of information and language expressions, and justifying one's choices is naturally delegated to students. The simulation methodology fell short of their expectations. Several students would inquire when the 'real' lesson would begin, '*When will we stop playing and start learning?*' (2ON10). As referred to in the literature review, some students resist simulations when they do not perceive such a methodology as 'serious' learning (Jung and Levitin, 2002). Similarly, students questioned the relevance of the simulation topics to their professional path. A biology student or an engineering student could not always understand how working on a business brochure or a mission statement for a photography club for example, was related to their major. This attitude would surface especially during the discussion with their teacher about their grades and performance.

Teacher-directed learning models that the majority of students are exposed to throughout their education have conditioned them to resist active learning strategies (Weimer, 2013). According to the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, 'the school environment in both public and private schools is characterized by the dominance of teacher-centered teaching approaches and an almost complete absence of active learning approaches' (2006, 17). The findings suggest that one possible cause for resistance to autonomous learning activities stems from the teacher-

centered learning environments and that the students brought into the English 101 classroom.

#### *4.2.2. Students' perceptions of the place English 101 holds at the university and the role of English in their lives*

Another source of resistance seems to come from students' perceptions of the English 101 course and the role of English in their lives. For many students, this English course had little immediate meaning other than a university curriculum requirement. In response to the teachers' appeal to put more effort into the course, one of the students replied, *'but, miss, ENGL101 grade is not part of the GPA'* (1TD25). Several students upon hearing this gasped and showed signs of relief. Students just wanted to pass the course to get it out of the way. To prove their point that English is not important for their other courses, a student remarked, *'My teacher [in major] says that he doesn't care how good my English is in my essays. He says, I'm interested in your ideas.'* (2TD16). Overall, students perceived their major courses as important to their career while all other university requirements in languages and humanities distracted them from obtaining a degree in their field. Students remarked, *'The English sessions are a waste of time because language can't be an academic course'* (FGS3) and, *'We don't like the language courses, we want to study scientific courses.'* (FGS23).

Instances of avoiding work in class ranged from not bringing homework, reading packs, notebooks or pens, to appearing in class just with two mobile phones and a pack of cigarettes (2TD3). Teacher 1 asked her 14 students to share the content of the phone messages they exchanged during the 50-minute lesson. The students showed enthusiasm for this activity and readily 'escaped' from the planned class task to share their messages. One exchange was between the cousins in the classroom forwarding the pictures of a baby cousin born in Greece. Some of the other exchanges included the following: *'shou bro weinak?'* [*'Where are you, bro?'*], *'naatrinak'* [*'I'm waiting for you'*], *'what are you doing?'* *'How's the English hour?'* *'Hello baby, how are you?'* (Received five times by the same girl), *'there will be a surprise for you at 8'*, a joke from a friend, a phone recharge card number from a mother, and a few personal messages that students did not want to share (1TD28). In addition to coming to class unprepared, students were reliant on the teacher for explanations and would rather ask the teachers to explain the instructions, than read the instructions themselves.

Ambivalent attitudes towards the course stemmed from mixed signals that students received from the university culture. The data revealed that some students were reluctant to ameliorate their language because they were not asked for such language production standards in their other classes, nor did they see the importance or relevance of English 101 autonomous learning activities. Some representative quotes include: *'Miss, we use English only in our English class. In our other courses we use Arabic.'* (20N19); *'ENGL 101 is like a VAT on food.'* (2TD7); *'We just want to pass the course.'* (2TD7); *'Why portfolio?'*(1TD30). Two studies conducted in the same

institution found that although English is the medium of instruction at the university, the instructors' primary concern was to teach the content of their discipline and they asserted that they did not have the necessary training to 'teach English,' nor did they feel it was their job to do so.

Another possible cause of resistance is the ambiguity of the place English holds in the student's lives. For these students, satisfying the socio-economic requirements to become successful in Lebanese society firstly means obtaining a university degree. Most of the major universities in Lebanon teach in a foreign language and these university students need to grapple with the place these foreign languages may hold in their future. For many, further studies or jobs abroad are a viable and realistic option. Although English becomes a kind of passport to future success, students are often incapable of seeing the long term place English holds. Orr and Annous (2018) conducted a study in the same context to find out tertiary level students' perceptions of the language in education policy in Lebanon. Students acknowledged the benefits of English for their future. They viewed English as a necessary medium of instruction at all levels of education placing English as the best means for studying science, technology, business and the media. They also viewed English as important for their future education or careers abroad placing English as the conduit to emigration (Orr and Annous, 2018).

In our study, the students' perceptions oscillated between almost a unanimous claim that English would hold an important role in their future life voiced during class discussions and, on the other hand, statements like, '*Students only need Arabic to work in an Arab country,*' (FGS8) or '*In Lebanon...connection with political people will give you an opportunity to have a good job even if you were failing your courses in university.*' (FGS30). The findings suggest that their ambivalent attitude towards learning English in general impacted their preparedness to engage in autonomous activities in the English classroom.

## **5. Discussion and Implications**

This study of resistance to autonomous learning reveals the complex nature of L2 learning and teaching where *cultures of learning* and broader social contexts need to be considered (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, 2013; Jin & Cortazzi, 2017; Sonaiya, 2002). The cultural appropriateness of innovations in teaching methodology has often been viewed in the literature as a possible source of resistance (Blidi, 2017; Shamim, 1996). In this context, the students often questioned, negotiated and resisted 'the participation modes that their teacher [was] endeavoring to construct' (Miller & Zuengler, 2011, 133) and which might have felt alien to the students. Students resisted collaborative learning, were unwilling to independently use available language learning resources, resisted metacognitive activities and resisted the evaluation process. The possible causes of resistance raised discussions about mismatches between students' expectations and the course design, the types of



learning cultures that the students brought to the classroom, and the perceptions of the place English holds both at the university and later on in their lives.

Throughout the semester, some of the resistance appeared to be related to the conditioning students had received from their schooling. The findings showed that the students were primarily interested in the tangible achievements resulting from an exam-oriented education, and thus were mostly interested in short-term results, like their course grade, rather than the long-term second language learning goals. The teachers held the view that students needed to take more responsibility to become less teacher-dependent in their language learning, but for the students reliance on the teachers was perceived as an easier way to pass the course. The teacher-centered, product-oriented educational system the students in this study had been exposed to, created a set of cultural expectations somewhat removed from the process-oriented, autonomous teaching methodology in the language course under investigation.

While the main focus of this research centered on resistance to autonomous learning, the researchers noticed, as the course progressed, evidence of increased self-regulated functioning of the students. This progress was not linear and at different points throughout the semester students consistently showed resistance to collaborative and process-oriented tasks especially when they were not able to foresee or perceive how the learning activities were directly related to the course assessments (Canagarajah, 1993; Jing, 2006). This evidence that autonomous learning can be cultivated is encouraging, especially when there is a positive attitude among some university teachers and students majoring in education towards introducing active learning in Lebanese classrooms (Daouk, Bahous, & Bacha, 2016). Training pre-service teachers and supporting the implementation of this type of methodology in schools eventually might bring about changes for a more learner-centered classroom culture in Lebanon.

This small-scale qualitative study began to probe the issues of resistance to autonomous learning in the Lebanese context. Investigating students' resistance allowed us to appreciate the complex and multi-dimensional aspects of autonomy. Further steps that will involve a larger empirical pool of students and teachers would yield more in-depth insights into issues such as processes of students' acculturation in language classrooms and teachers' cultural baggage that might color their attitudes and practices in an autonomous language classroom. Other steps would explore university cultures which directly or indirectly impact students' attitudes towards autonomous learning and how these institutions support individual teachers' efforts in promoting autonomy and collaborative learning.

## **Conclusion**

In order to prepare for the challenges of both academic and professional life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the learner should to be exposed to classroom practices that allow the development of skills such as autonomy. For a deeper understanding of autonomous learning in the L2 classroom and students' abilities to make decisions concerning

their language learning, students' agency needs to be considered. Student autonomy is enacted within the framework determined and controlled by the teachers who are 'aiming for a particular kind of autonomy... a set of desirable behaviors matching the demands of the school and the society that the learner is about to enter' (Benson, 2009, p. 25), and the students have no say in setting goals for themselves and therefore often do not see the relevance of these activities for their language acquisition or longer term life prospects. The implementation of autonomous learning should consider students' agency in their language development as a pivotal principle that shapes classroom interactions. Once students' agency in their own language learning is taken into consideration, the nature of the teaching and learning process will be transformed whereby the decision-making will no longer be top down. Students will play a more active role in other elements of the course, such as resource selection, evaluation processes, and setting longer term language learning goals. Curriculum developers and teachers should also be sensitive to students' contexts outside the classroom which may impact students' disposition toward taking charge of their language development.

## References

- [1] Akar, B. (2012). Teaching for Citizenship in Lebanon: Teachers talk about the civics classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28(3), 470-480.
- [2] Annous, S., & Nicolas, M.O. (2015). Academic territorial borders: A look at the writing ethos in business courses in an environment in which English Is a foreign language. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 29(1), 93-111.
- [3] Annous, S., Nicolas, M.O., & Townsend, M. (2017). Territorial Borders and the Teaching of Writing in English: Lessons from Research at the University of Balamand. In L. Arnold, A. Nebel & L. Ronesi, (Eds.), *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East-North Africa Region* (pp. 85-114). Colorado: University Press.
- [4] Bacha, N. N., & Bahous, R. (2011). Foreign language education in Lebanon: A context of cultural and curricular complexities. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(6), 1320-1328.
- [5] Balçıkanlı, C. (2008). Fostering learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 16(1), 277-284.
- [6] Balçıkanlı, C. (2010). Learner autonomy in language learning: Student teachers' beliefs. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 35, 90-103.
- [7] Benson, P. (1997). The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 18-34). London: Longman.
- [8] Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. Harlow: Longman.
- [9] Benson, P. (2006). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching* 40, 21-40.



- [10] Benson, P. (2009). Making sense of autonomy in language learning. In A. Barfield, S. Toogood & R. Pemberton (Eds.), *Maintaining control: Autonomy and language learning* (pp. 13-26). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- [11] Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy and independence in language learning*. London: Longman.
- [12] Blidi, S. (2017). *Collaborative learner autonomy: A mode of learner autonomy development*. Springer.  
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-981-10-2048-3.pdf>
- [13] Bloom, M. (2007). Tensions in a non-traditional Spanish classroom. *Language Teaching Research* 11(1), 85-102.
- [14] Borg, S., & Alshumaimeri, Y. (2019). Language learner autonomy in a tertiary context: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research* 23(1). 9-38.
- [15] Canagarajah, A. S. (1993). Critical Ethnography of a Sri Lankan Classroom: Ambiguities in Student Opposition to reproduction Through ESOL. *TESOL Quarterly* 27(4), 601-626.
- [16] Chik, A. (2018). Learner autonomy and digital practices. In A. Chik, N. Aoki, & R. Smith, (Eds.), *Autonomy in language learning and teaching: New research agendas* (pp. 73-92). London: Palgrave.
- [17] Chik, A., Aoki, N., & Smith, R. (Eds.) (2018). *Autonomy in language learning and teaching: New research agendas*. London: Palgrave.
- [18] Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1997). Cultures of Learning: Language Classrooms in China. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp.169-206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [19] Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (2013). Introduction: Researching cultures of learning. In M. Cortazzi & L. Jin (Eds.), *Researching cultures of learning: International Perspectives on language learning and education*. (pp. 1-17). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [20] Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [21] Crookall, D., & Oxford R.L. (Eds.). (1990). *Simulation, gaming, and language learning*. New York: Newbury House Publishers.
- [22] Daouk, Z., Bahous, R., & Bacha, N.N. (2016). Perceptions on the effectiveness of active learning strategies. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 8(3), 360-375.
- [23] Dafei, D. (2007). An exploration of the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency. *Asian EFL Journal*. 24. 1-23.
- [24] Fleonova O., & Tassone, G. (2016). Collaborative Action Research as a Tool for Teachers' Professional Development. *Hawliyat*, 17, 73-101.
- [25] Garcia-Carbonell, A., Rising, B., Montero, B., & Watts, F. (2001). Simulation/gaming and the acquisition of communicative competence in another language. *Simulation & Gaming*, 32(4), 481-491.

- [26] Gill, S. K., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2013). English in Asian and European higher education. In C. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- [27] Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup>). London: Longman.
- [28] Hiemstra, R., & Brockett, R. (1994). Resistance to self-direction in learning can be overcome. In R. Hiemstra & R. Brockett (Eds.) *Overcoming Resistance to Self-Direction in Adult Learning* (pp. 89-92). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- [29] Hill, J. (2009). *Student Evaluation of a Simulation-based Course*. Paper presented at the ISAGA Conference, Singapore.
- [30] Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [31] Holliday, A. (2003). Social autonomy: Addressing the dangers of culturalism in TESOL. In D. Palfreyman & R. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures* (pp. 110-126). New York: Palgrave.
- [32] Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2017). Practising cultures of learning in internationalising universities, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 38(3), 237-250, DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2015.1134548
- [33] Jing, H. (2006). Learner resistance in metacognition training? An exploration of mismatches between learner and teacher agendas. *Language Teaching Research* 10(1), 95-117.
- [34] Jones, K. (1982). *Simulations in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [35] Jones, K. (1995). *Simulations: A handbook for teachers and trainers* (3<sup>rd</sup>). New Jersey: Nicholas Publishing.
- [36] Jones, R.H. (2018). Learning through technology. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Learning English as a Second Language* (pp. 319-326). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [37] Jung, C.S.Y., & Levitin, H. (2002). Using a simulation in an ESL classroom: A descriptive analysis. *Simulation and Gaming*, 33(3), 367-375.
- [38] Keeney-Kennicutt, W., Gunersel, A., & Simpson, N. (2008). Overcoming Student Resistance to a Teaching Innovation. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2(1).  
[doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2008.020105](https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2008.020105)
- [39] Little, D. (2005). The Common European Framework and the European Language Portfolio: involving learners and their judgements in the assessment process. *Language Testing* 22(3), 321-336.
- [40] Little, D. (2003). Learner autonomy and public examinations. In D. Little, J. Ridley & E. Ushioda (Eds.) *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: Teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment* (pp. 223-233). Dublin: Authentik.

- [41] Little, D., Ridley, J., & Ushioda, E. (Eds.). (2003). *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: Teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment*. Dublin: Authentik.
- [42] Lebanese Association for Educational Studies. (2006). *National educational strategy in Lebanon*. Retrieved from: [http://www.laes.org/upload//editor\\_upload/file/Reports/strategicplanle b/ Vision%20Document%20%20English.pdf](http://www.laes.org/upload//editor_upload/file/Reports/strategicplanle b/ Vision%20Document%20%20English.pdf)
- [43] Maharaj, N. (2016). Using field notes to facilitate critical reflection. *Reflective Practice*, 17(2) 114-124. DOI: 10.1080/14623943.2015.1134472
- [44] Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2016). *Private Universities and Institutions*. Retrieved from the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education website: [http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/english/Private\\_ Univ.htm](http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/english/Private_ Univ.htm)
- [45] Miller, E., & Zuengler, J. (2011). Negotiating access to learning through resistance to classroom practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(Supplementary Issue), 130-147.
- [46] Nicolas, M.O., & Annous, S. (2013). Assessing WAC elements in business syllabi. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76(2) 172 –187.
- [47] Nicolas, M.O., & Blair, J. (2018). Simulation as a key to successful English language acquisition in an EFL Arabic-speaking environment. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Thought*, 7(1), 143–156.
- [48] Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 204-214). London: Longman.
- [49] Orr, M., & Annous, S. (2018). There is no alternative! Student perceptions of learning in a second language in Lebanon. *Journal of Language and Education*, 4(1), 79-91.
- [50] Oxford, R. (2003). Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy. In D. Palfreyman & R. Smith (Eds.), *Learner Autonomy across cultures: Language Education Perspectives* (pp.75-91). Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- [51] Oxford, R. (2017). *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies: Self-Regulation in Context* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- [52] Palfreyman, D. (2003). Introduction: Culture and learner autonomy. In D. Palfreyman & R. Smith (Eds.), *Learner Autonomy across cultures: Language Education Perspectives* (pp.75-91). Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- [53] Palfreyman, D., & Smith, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Learner Autonomy across cultures: Language Education Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- [54] Pawlak, M., Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Bielak, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Autonomy in Second Language Learning: Managing the Resources*. Springer, Cham.
- [55] Pennycook, A. (1997). Cultural alternatives and autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 35-53). London: Longman.

- [56] Po-Ying, C. (2007). How students react to the power and responsibility in being decision makers in their own learning? *Language Teaching Research*, 11(2), 225-241
- [57] Rose, H. (2012). Language learning strategy research: Where do we go from here? *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 3(2), 137-148.
- [58] Salies, T. G. (2002). Promoting strategic competence: What simulations can do for you. *Simulation & Gaming*, 33(3), 280-283.
- [59] Schmenk, B. (2005). Globalizing learner autonomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(1), 107-118.
- [60] Schormová, Z. (2017). Simulation as a Strategy for Enhancing Learner Autonomy in Developing Communicative Competence in ESP. In M. Pawlak, A. Mystkowska-Wiertelak & J. Bielak (Eds.), *Autonomy in Second Language Learning: Managing the Resources* (pp.35-50). Springer, Cham.
- [61] Shamim, F. (1996). Learner resistance to innovation in classroom methodology. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp. 105-121). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [62] Smith, R. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 395-397.
- [63] Sonaiya, R. (2002). Autonomous language learning in Africa: A mismatch of cultural assumptions. *Language Culture and Curriculum*. 15(2), 106-116. Doi:10.1080/07908310208666637
- [64] Stover, S., & Holland, C. (2018). Student resistance to collaborative learning. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 12(2), article 8 doi.org/10.20429/ijstol.2018.120208
- [65] Tolman, A. O. & Kremling, J. (2017). *Why Students Resist Learning: A Practical Model for Understanding and Helping Students*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing
- [66] Vetter, A., Reynolds, J., Beane, H., Roquemore, K., Rorrer, A., & Shepherd-Allred, K. (2012). Reframing resistance in the English classroom. *English Journal*, 102(2), 114-121.
- [67] Walton, J. D. (2011). Dissonance in the critical classroom: The role of social psychological processes in learner resistance. *College Student Journal*, 45(4), 769-785.
- [68] Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centred teaching: Five key changes to practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- [69] Williams, J. P. (2012). Emergent themes. In L.M.Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (p. 249). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- [70] Zakharia, Z. (2011). Language-in-education policies in contemporary Lebanon: Youth perspectives. In O. Abi-Mershed (Ed.), *Trajectories of education in the Arab world: Legacies and challenges* (pp. 157-184). London: Routledge.

# Comparative Effects of ICT-Integrated Learning Strategies on Spatial Reasoning Skills Among Nigerian Lower Primary School Pupils

A. G Adeleke

P. O. Jegede

## Abstract

The study investigated the reported regressive performances of students in spatial reasoning concepts with a view to promote early spatial reasoning of lower primary school pupils across ability levels and sex. Non-equivalent experimental research design was employed. A hundred and five (105) pupils in four intact classes were exposed to six weeks intervention and subsequently post-tested. Data collected were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance. The study found significant effect of treatment on the performance of study participants in the ICT-integrated Think-Pair-Share treatment group. No significant interactive effect of ability was found though, the pupils of low-ability group benefitted more from the intervention ( $M = 12.32, 11.07$ ;  $SD = 2.86, 2.98$ ). There was no significant different of intervention between boys and girls across strategies and abilities. The study concluded that, while ICT-integrated learning strategies could improve output in spatial concepts of pupils at the primary school level, performances on the basis of sex-groups and ability groups have no significant interaction effect on the learners of spatial reasoning.

**Keywords:** performance, spatial reasoning, treatment, strategies, ability group, think-pair-share, concrete representation abstract, learners' self-controlled

## Introduction

Early graft of mathematic ability has been ascertained to predict later mathematical achievement and related endeavours in life [6]. Hence, the promotion of early mathematic competency is of critical importance. Established link between spatial ability and mathematics in early childhood by neuropsychological and brain imaging studies and behavioural evidences potent that math performance can be improved

with spatial reasoning. Nigeria's experience in local, national and international examinations show dwindling performances of examinees traceable to substantiated inefficient score in spatial reasoning items consistently featured [5, 1] in such standardized examinations. This was interpreted to mean that, children understanding of space pattern is necessary and demanded by the curriculum. The advent of information and communication technology (ICT) eulogized as potentially powerful and enabling tool for education change and reform is hereby engaged in learning delivery for comparative analysis of performance in learning spatial concepts among primary school pupils.

### Methodology

Non-equivalent pretest, posttest and control group research design was adopted. The population consisted of 357,533 pupils' enrolled in 1, 378 primary schools in Osun State (Daily Independent, 2013) characterized with male and female learners of varied academic abilities. Study sample was eked out using purposive and multi-stage sampling techniques. Primary III class was purposively selected based on the learners' age (6 – 8 years) limit in early childhood. Four schools with 105 intact class pupils were multi-stage sampled in the three major towns of the state considering available facilities for the study. Research instruments included Spatial Reasoning for Children (SpatReC), an interactive, multimedia package designed using C-Sharp (C#) programming language and follows the taxonomy based on Benjamin Blooms' principles as revised by Anderson and Krathwohl in [8]; and Spatial Reasoning Test (SRT) used for pretest and posttest. Instruments, in a previous study [1] were adjudged validity and reliable. Learners in their intact classes were randomly assigned to study conditions namely; the three experimental groups and the one control group; three levels of cognitive ability groups - high, medium and low; and two sex groups - male and female. The intervention took forty minutes of Mathematics periods for three days in a week and six weeks in each of the schools excluding tests.

### Analysis:

Tests for significant interaction effect of treatment on groups were conducted. Result shows the test of equality of means to be significantly equal ( $t = 2.003$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in favor of equal variance assumed. The study's subjects were thus adjudged to be reliably homogeneous (Table 1).

**Table 1: Test for Difference in the Participating group's Post-test Scores**

	t-test for Equality of Means
--	------------------------------

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.003	103	.048	1.253	.626	.012	2.494

Furthermore, the post-test scores of the research participants were subjected to a test of difference via analysis of covariance using their experimental groups as the differentiating variable and the pre-test scores as the covariate to remove the possible effect of previous learning and other confounds. The result showed significant difference in the post-test scores ( $F = 2.934, p < .05$ ). It also showed from the table that, the R-squared value was 0.080 and the Adjusted R squared value stood at 0.053. This can be interpreted to mean that the maximum variance in the post test score is quite small. So other possible factors which might explain the difference in the post test scores and interact with the effectiveness of the learning strategies were sought after (Table 2).

**Table 2: Post-Test of Difference of Treatments**

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects - Dependent Variable: post test score					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	96.677 <sup>a</sup>	3	32.226	2.934	.037
Intercept	34388.204	1	34388.204	3131.034	.000
GRP	96.677	3	32.226	2.934	.037
R Squared = .080 (Adjusted R Squared = .053)					

The source of difference was located between the CRTL group and the CRA group (Table 3). It can be concluded that there exists significant difference among the learning strategies in improving performances.

**Table 3: Multiple Comparisons Post hoc Test**

Dependent Variable: post-test score Tukey HSD						
(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CTRL	TPS	.413	.924	.970	-2.00	2.83
	LSC	.514	.960	.950	-1.99	3.02
	CRA	2.514*	.960	.049	.01	5.02
* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						



Would there be any interactive effect of intervention between various academic ability pupils by virtue of learning strategies? To answer this question, the post-test scores of the research participants were subjected to a test of difference via analysis of covariance. Result shown in Table 4 revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of experimental groupings and ability levels on the post-test scores ( $F = 1.440$ ,  $p > .05$ ). In this stance therefore, the research question is answerable in the negative.

**Table 4: Test of Difference of Treatment and Ability in Post-test**

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: post test score					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	113.502 <sup>a</sup>	7	16.215	1.440	.198
Intercept	28102.188	1	28102.188	2495.206	.000
GRP * ability	113.502	7	16.215	1.440	.198

a. R Squared = .094 (Adjusted R Squared = .029)

Lastly, could any difference in performance result from variation in sexes? Despite the slight differences in group sizes, no significant difference in the performance on the basis of sex-groups (value = 0.186,  $> 0.05$ ) was found. It as well showed that, there was no significant interaction found between groups and sex in describing performance of pupils in spatial reasoning ( $F = 0.030$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (Table5).

**Table 5: Test of Difference on Post-test in Treatment / Sex Groups**

Descriptive											
Post test score											
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.	df	f	sig
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound					
Male	41	18.15	3.190	.498	17.14	19.15	11	28	1	.030	.862
Female	64	18.27	3.560	.445	17.38	19.15	12	26	103		
Total	105	18.22	3.405	.332	17.56	18.88	11	28	104		

**Discussion & Conclusion:**

The application of ICT unto learning strategies was with a view to improve performance in spatial concepts in pupils of low and high ability at the primary school level. Notable results included significant effect of treatment on performance at the removal of possible effect of previous learning and other confounds. This discovery agrees with [3] whose study established that particular intervention in the experimental group might increase learner’s motivation and in turn lead to higher



achievement levels for learners in the experimental group than for those in the control group. [2, 4] also found particular learning strategies - conceptual learning strategy and online tool substantially increasing math performance growth in separate studies.

Ability levels' effect on academic achievement as investigated indicated no significance in the post-test scores even after controlling for the previous learning through the pre-test. This result was at variance to [7] study on game-based learning (GBL) which found that, many students with low confidence toward learning mathematics can be restored and improve their confidence toward mathematics. Conclusively, performances on the basis of sex-groups and ability groups have no significant interaction found between ICT-integrated strategy learners of spatial reasoning.

## References

- [1] Adeleke, A. G. (2015) Comparative Effectiveness of ICT-Integrated Learners'-Self-Controlled, Concrete-Representational-Abstract and Think-Pair-Share Strategies in Enhancing Spatial reasoning Skills of Primary School Pupils in Osun State. A Doctoral Dissertation Submitted to Postgraduate College, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
- [2] Adeleke, M. A. (2007) Strategic Improvement of Mathematical Problem-solving Performance of Secondary School Students using Procedural and Conceptual Learning Strategies. *Educational Research and Review* Vol. 2 (9), pp.259-263.
- [3] Alrabai, F. (2014) The Effects of Teachers' In-Class Motivational Intervention on Learners' EFL Achievement. *Applied Linguistics*. 2014 Oxford University Press.
- [4] Haelermans, C. & Ghysels, J. (2014) The Effect of an Individualized Online Practice Tool on Math Performance - Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment.
- [5] Jegede, P. O., Adelodun, O. A. & Okoli, B. C. (1998) Evaluation of Test Characteristics of UME Mathematics Items in the Context of Bloom's Taxonomic Categories. *Journal of Creativity in Teaching for the Acquisition and Dissemination of Effective Learning (CITADEL)* Vol.3 (6) pp.233-241.
- [6] Krajewski, K & Schneider, W. (2009) Early development of quantity to number-word linkage as a precursor of mathematical school achievement and mathematical difficulties: Findings from a four-year longitudinal study. *Learning and Instruction*, 19(6), 513-526.

- [7] Ku, O., Chen, S.-Y., Wu, D.-H., Lao, A.-C.-C., & Chan, T.-W. (2014). The Effects of Game-Based Learning on Mathematical Confidence and Performance: High Ability vs. Low Ability. *Educational Technology & Society*, 17 (3), 65–78.
- [8] Wilson, L. O. (2013) Understanding the New Version of Bloom's Taxonomy - A succinct discussion of the revisions of Bloom's classic cognitive taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl and how to use them effectively. Available at <http://www4.uwsp.edu/education/lwilson/curric/newtaxonomy.htm>

# Communication and Digital Emotions: The Desire of Community as a Dimension of the Existence

**Simona Perfetti**  
**Rosario Ponziano**

## Abstract

According to Ong (1986), for a long time, in the human history, direct or *vis-à-vis* communication has been the only modality of communication; traditions have essentially been oral and their survival depended on the continuous renewal, which was represented by the *vis-à-vis* narration of stories and activities. In this way, the oral culture has created some expedients to remind and let people remind some aspects: a certain structure of the speech (fixed themes, formulas, proverbs, rhythmic style, etc.), a particular kind of (narrative) speech, a specific behavioral schematization (“strong” characters, types). The communication process is always a fundamental and essential process (Wright, 1976): it involves individuals in a deep relationship inside which the linguistic and paralinguistic codes, which come into play, take on complex meanings. In fact, despite the apparent facility through which two or more people come into contact among them, the deep sense of communication is something which is complicated and mysterious. Each person, who is involved in the communication process, attributes, on the basis of his/her subjective and social-group existential experience, his/her own meaning to each sign. According to Wolton (2006), communication has to do with four dimensions, which are complementary among them: first of all, communication is the ideal of expression and exchange which is at the origin of the Western culture and of democracy; talking about democracy presumes, as a basic concept, the existence of free and equal individuals. Communication concerns also those media which have remarkably transformed the relationships between communication and society. Still, communication concerns the whole mechanism of the new technologies that, with information science, telecommunications, audiovisuals and their interconnection, have globally modified the premises of the exchange of messages and power. In the end, communication includes also all those values, those symbols and those representations which function as a mechanism for the functioning of the public space, of democracies and of the international community through information and media. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rosario Ponziano has written the paragraphs: 1. Communication, yesterday and today and 2. Loneliness and freedom of the person between mediated communication and digital emotions. The educational gamble.

<sup>2</sup> Simona Perfetti has written the paragraphs: 3. The origins of communication. Dialogue and narration and 4. The desire of community and digital emotions. Educational reflections.

**Keywords:** communication, digital, emotions, desire, community, dimension, existence

## Introduction

### 1. Communication, yesterday and today

Today the advent and consolidation of digital media have expanded and, partly, modified the ways and contents of communication. In such perspective, the introduction of new media has an impact both on the evolution of the communication process and on the social context in which the media appear. Digital media create new kinds of action and interaction and new forms of social relationships, thus determining a complex restructuring of the dimensions of space, time and memory. All this leads the contemporary individual to feel alone in his/her choices of the behaviors because nobody is able to give certainties any longer, with the exception of the temporary and revocable certainties (La Marca A. 2016; Prensky, 2001).

The educational occasions offered by the new technologies of the communication:

Suggest the urgency of a new network of relationships with the traditional educational practices, with the school culture and its curricular structure. Knowledge tends to become more and more performative, cross, shared, cooperated. The urgency of a new tribal feeling takes shape, of a community dimension in which intelligence may find a point of interaction, even if it is projected in more and more virtual spaces of understanding, of work production (Salzano, 2000, p. 7).

By making a step backward in time it is useful to recall the thought of some Authors, who reflected on the changes of the communication in relation to the advent of media and the Internet. In that sense, Thompson (1998) distinguished two typologies of mediated interaction in contraposition with the *vis-à-vis* interaction: a “mediated interaction” which develops with the aid of a technical means among individuals, who are far in space and/or time, and that circumscribes the series of symbolic addresses, which are available to the participants; an “almost mediated interaction” which allows, instead, to exchange symbolic contents among individuals, who are far in space and/or time, according to a flow of unidirectional communication, which addresses to a potentially undefined group of people. Many of the relationships, which are established in daily life in this way, consist of a combination of different forms of interaction: in other words, they are *hybrid*. If, according to Thompson, the current forms of communication may be defined as “hybrid”, in Wolton’s point of view, cinema, radio and television on the one hand, and the advent of the Internet on the other, led the current society to be defined as a *mass egotistical* society (Wolton, 1997). According to Wolton, television and the Internet meet two different needs, the person and the mass’ needs: freedom for the person, equality for the mass. The generalist television creates some communication relationships, which are more and more developed for more and more heterogeneous groups of audience. Since, today,

we live in a more and more complex and problematic society in which different cultures coexist, television and radio may represent a sort of “bridge” among desires, preferences and fears of the different social groups since, with their systems of symbols, which are broadly shared, and a wide choice of programs which, just for this diversity, meet everybody’s tastes, they allow to rediscover the fundamental elements of staying together.

On the contrary, the advent of the Internet represented, for the person, an educational dimension to be lived “in loneliness”, because the person *chooses* by *himself/herself* the communication paths in order to implement his/her own cognitive map.

Therefore, Wolton’s thought aims at not opposing old media to the new media, since what is important in communication is both the content and the role that the different media have inside a communication theory; we must not confuse technical progress and human and deep sense of communication; it is not technology which makes communication, but people and the society (Wolton, 2001).

Nowadays, the real challenge of communication, on the basis of the changes in the communication during the time, concerns the elaboration of a theory of communication which may be able to guarantee the individual communication through the Internet on the one hand, and the mass communication on the other, which may play the role of guaranteeing the social unity.

## **2. Loneliness and freedom of the person between mediated communication and digital emotions: The educational gamble**

The crisis of deep relationships and identities which seems to characterize the current connected society (Ito, 2008 ) leads the person to live the relationship with the others in a manner which might be defined of “circular solipsism” (Wolton, 2001), a relationship which significantly reveals itself in that nomadic wandering which characterizes the social dimension of the Internet. To complicate the context, there is the fact that the person’s identity is a reality, which is not isolated but that changes following the spirit of the time. In order to understand that, it is necessary to start from what Boccia Artieri (2012) defined as a *mediological approach*, that is, thinking about the media as a place for the construction of paths of sense, both individual and collective paths, as elements which influence the social reality.

In a time in which digitization and dematerialization are leading the person towards the categorical imperative of a *widespread showcase* (Ferraresi, 2009), the identity necessarily appears weak and fragmented. In that sense the Internet represents the instrument which allows to “play” with identities, without having the restriction to remain tied to one of them. Therefore, the media represent some experiential sources in order to live a sort of “virtual extraterritoriality” in the ambit of which, as Bauman (2003) affirms, the identity represents a task which is not performed yet:

Identity as something which is necessary to build or select among alternative options: “who am I?”. The sense of this question finds its basis only if the individual knows he/she can be someone different from what he/she is, if he/she must do something in order to reinforce and make a choice “real” (p. 29).

In the area of this new anthropological dimension, which is made of identity crisis and of a new emotional *régime*, the barriers between the public and private spheres fall, or rather public and private spheres become two dimensions which risk blending. In such perspective the neologism *publicity* (Boyd, 2007) indicates this mixture between public sphere and private sphere which, by generating a new culture of intimacy, fixes new educational challenges. In such perspective, in a society in which communication and information are omnipresent, an educational challenge, which is in line with the times, might become real not so much by bringing together individuals or collectivities, but by managing and acknowledging the mutual *differences*. Dealing with a constructive and pedagogical subject on the awareness and management of the *differences* as an anthropological value broadens the reflection up to the ambit of online life: how are the identity and awareness of the others lived on the Internet? In the ambit of the social media different lives and identities are experienced. People:

by dissimulating and fragmenting their own identity, lead, however, in the new environment, their own history, which, in intervals, erupts with strength (Massaro Grotti, 2000, p. 41).

In the protected space of the Internet the deepest thoughts are shared, the most determined opinions are affirmed, and it is possible to reach a multitude of people in a fast and instantaneous way:

Above all it is possible to keep one’s own identity concealed: everybody may choose the person that he/she wants to be, everybody may behave as he/she better likes (Cantelmi, Grifo 2002, p. 53).

In the era of digital communication, of a fast communication, which is without rules, the “I” necessarily moves in a dimension which is different if compared to that in which his/her body moves, since the actions of the “I” consist of *language, symbols and writing*. In this complex anthropological perspective, the “I” and the other person seem to exchange the communication roles in a continuous game of “ephemeral” cross references just because they are disengaged from the corporeity. This absence of bodies and traces and this sort of identity vacuum which already characterize the whole social totality, even if they seem to be some dimensions which, in a certain sense, facilitate the virtual meeting with the others, actually they lead the educational reflection towards the acknowledgement that the contemporary person is always more *alone* in a myriad of “alterities”; such condition of isolation is rather more difficult to be lived just because the current age is an age which is marked by a form of *communication*, which is faster and faster and more and more instantaneous (Vittadini, 2018; John, N.A. 2013).

Even if the technical and scientific developments have caused a severe reduction in the distances among individuals, the crux to be solved is the *existential discomfort* of the modern individual, a discomfort which is marked by a loneliness, that is much more desperate when it is linked to a form of “apparent” freedom. In other terms, the person, nowadays, is as if he/she lived in a sort of dilemma: on the one hand, tending towards the others may be seen as a tension aiming at promoting the *differences*, to the other hand the individual, “by living” an immaterial age, would seem that he/she runs the risk of losing sight of the deep sense of what is *humanly possible*. Even if in the virtual world of the Internet it is possible to play with the absence of the bodies and with the simultaneity and increase of the communication paths in order to *apparently* facilitate the need for talking about himself/herself and talking to himself/herself, the emotional aspects, which lead to search for online relationships, are more complex. In order to realize the multiplicity of the elements into play, it is necessary to reflect on the fact that, thanks to the mediation of an instrument, the person succeeds in telling and telling about himself/herself more and more easily, if compared to a *vis-à-vis* meeting.

In the ambit of the online communication game, since the essential aspects of the not verbal communication start lacking, some compensatory criteria of the missing piece of information follow; in the world of digital media, it is possible to experience images, words, and sounds as forms through which it is possible to express the modern creativity.

The ways of communicating have surely changed, and even if a cognitive order is given to online life, anyway, basically there is the need for being listened to and understood in a dimension which includes and embraces us. The Internet offers the great possibility to take advantage of a new way in order to communicate our emotions, for telling about them in freedom, but a freedom which must not be misunderstood and interpreted as an absence of rules; it is rather a search for new rules, which are different from those which were known and used in the past.

Today the person already lives a world of messages which are not identifiable any longer with the only verbal messages or with messages which come from other people; in the current society of the crisis, it is the whole environment which “speaks” (Pati, 2000). In such “entirely communicative” environment, also the ultimate sense of the word seems to have been overcome by the power of images; even when it seems that the word succeeds in prevailing still on all the other linguistic codes, always a “particular word” remains, a word which, as the person, feels strongly the effect of the environmental influence; hence, the more growing number of “set phrases”, through which the individual expresses his/her feelings, even if most of times he/she does it by using lines of films or advertising slogans; words, as emotions, seem already to have become “consumer goods” (Pati, 2000).

Therefore, if the word and emotions risk this “commercialization”, how is it possible to try to make an educational path which takes into consideration the development of



all the existential dimensions? Emotions as feelings, which are lived online, are emotional dimensions as the real ones; it is not by simplifying the issue and by affirming that “real emotions are more authentic than the online ones” that those, who deal with education, solve the person’s educational problems. On the contrary, education has to lead the reflection not to exclusively privilege the oral language and writing as unique means in order to communicate but, by distancing itself from a *glottocentric* vision of communication, it has to embrace a rich and broad series of expressions of the body and technological instruments which the individual, in the course of the history, has always produced in order to tell about himself/herself and to tell stories, projects and utopias. The language of the body is a language to which human and social sciences have to pay full attention in the prospect of a multiplicity of factors, which may manage and integrate the original expressions of the thought with the contemporaneous ones of digital media.

Faced with such dimensions of crisis, which have invaded the whole person’s existence, the educational proposal consists of elaborating a *philosophy of the existence* which exalts life, which gives strength to everything that may be useful to promote the human existence. This anthropological need of a “rediscovery” of the person in the world becomes more and more an educational need; it is not sufficient to hope in the conception of new relational systems, what is necessary to modify is the overall concept of life which is a delicate path towards the acquisition of the form, towards the capacity of building an existential project. In this undertaking towards the achievement of our unique and unrepeatable form, it becomes urgent to understand the naturalness of the failure, of the existential defeat, of the risk, of the unsuccessful *vis-à-vis* with the others. Educating to communication means to talk about a form of communication which has to recover a sense which is not connected to simple technology, but to social and cultural dimensions. In other words, the sense of a humanistic philosophy of communication has to be identified “in dreams, projects, utopias” (Buber, 1958, p. 238). The educational communication arises from *willfulness*, it is identified with gestures and actions led by conscience, it pursues some objectives aiming at acquiring form and, by virtue of that, it may not lead the individual to search for false forms of freedom and mystifying manifestations of being *vis-à-vis* with the others; on the contrary, the educational communication leads the person to reflect on the fact that his/her own’s unique and unrepeatable form is not a human characteristic which is conquered once and for all in a definitive manner but it is, instead, a dimension, a peculiarity of the troubled existence, which the individual constantly and with difficulty searches for, since past life means to transcend, plan, open up with the others continuously without, in any case, having the confirmations of a return and acknowledgement.

Martin Buber wrote that freedom:

is a bridge, not an abode. Freedom is the vibrant tab, is the fruitful ground zero. Constraint in education means a lack of union, humiliation and rebellion; a deep



relationship of reciprocity in education means open-mindedness and comprehension; freedom in education is the possibility of union and collaboration (Buber, 1958, p. 238).

Buber's words let us reflect on the importance of the concept of *communication integration*, which has not to be confused with the annulment of each person's singularities; in educational terms, communicative integration rather exalts the differences in the ambit of the dialogic unity and in the ambit of education to communication. Dealing with issues such as freedom, loneliness, existential defeat, the exaltation of differences leads human and social sciences to think education over, in terms also of comprehension and compassion, thus bringing into prominence of the educational issue the development of human life in all its historical, cultural and social dimensions.

### **3. The origins of communication: Dialogue and narration**

Today education should reflect on a cognitive path in which thinking and acting are not distinct but, on the contrary, they converge, thus sharing the person's essential themes. That's why it is primarily important to reflect on a person and his/her life with his/her shadows, with his/her vacuums of conscience, with his/her awareness to be fragile but, just for this reason, open to the *possibility*, to the incentives of an educational project which has to lead him/her to succeed in the constructive relationship with the others, in a dimension of intersubjectivity which always draws new incentives from the dynamics of circularity.

Letting the others understand what one says means not only to transmit contents, but it also means to guarantee their emotional resonance. The language, at least in its declaratory form, highlights some relationships – above, under, behind, in front of, here, there, etc. – but for another intelligence which *understands*, relationships are never neutral, they can be meanings. And for another subject who *wants*, relationships and meanings mean values (Laeng, 1982, p. 104).

Alberto Granese (2008) observed how the term “to communicate” derives from the term “community”, which, in its turn, is an inseparable concept from the “closeness” one. The word “communication”, in fact, derives from the Latin verb *communico*, that is, “to put in common”, which has the same etymological origin of the noun *communitas*, that is, “community”. Still, *communitas* comes from the Latin expression “*cummunus*”, that is, “*cum*” = with, together, “*munus*” = gift; communication is etymologically connected to the idea of community, that is, to the “gift of the mutual relationship”.

In the ambit of the pragmatic school of human communication of Palo Alto, among the axioms of communication expressed by Watzlavick (1971), it emerges that it is *impossible not to communicate*; the action of communicating represents a behavior, and given that it is impossible that a living system may not have a behavior, the impossibility of the non-communication follows.

In the reticular dimension of the Internet, an analogous space in which it is possible to experience “new” lives and “new” ways of communicating, the constant question which accompanies the person in the continuous discovery of “new” ways of approaching himself/herself and the others, is if such universe may represent the end of the communication, which is, from a teleological point of view, intended as a construction of a community, or if information highways may open infinite spaces in order to experience unusual and unexpected forms of communication.

If what is affirmed by Watzlavick is true in the “real” life, in the online life where does the fundamental sense of a communication lie, a communication which, no matter how digital, always keeps its original meaning of “putting in common”?

Reflecting on the fact that communication has, as its original function, the connection with the others means also that human communication always refers to a *dialogue*, that is to that dimension, which is the most adequate for the achievement of the social environment. In fact, if the explosion of new technologies has also led to radical changes in the way and form of communicating, however, the deep motivations have remained unchanged, motivations which, since the origins, have originated the *dialogue* and the *narration* (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000), which have been the first forms through which people have built their relationship with their own counterparts and the world. A careful reflection on this last aspect sheds light on the fact that the *narration* and the *dialogue* have always accompanied the individual’s existence and today they still go on doing it through digital media. The surfing without space and without time on the Internet ensures that the *dialogue* – which moves between orality and writing – enters a global dimension. In that sense, the complexity of the dialogic dimension ensures that the *dialogue* may be considered the first expression of the language just because, through the language, the person, by interacting with his/her own counterparts, has always established, as his/her final objective, the will to share with the others his/her own activity and *habitat*:

When the *homo faber* starts constructing the first hand tools, he contemporaneously feels the need for ‘communicating’ that to the others in order to have their collaboration and for ‘passing on’, to the youngest people, the acquired technique in order to not lose it. It would seem that it is possible to start talking about an awareness, which is still at an early stage, about owning a ‘memory’; anyway, what can be affirmed with greater certainty is that the *homo loquens* is more or less contemporaneous of the *homo faber*<sup>1</sup>. (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000, p. 42).

In this same perspective, Rossi-Landi in “*Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*” (“*The language as labour and market*”, *Note of the Translator*) lingers over the problem of the relationship between “material” and “linguistic” artifacts in order to highlight the deep homology; in that sense the two kinds of artifacts are products of the individual’s work and, in both products, natural and social dimensions are present.

Therefore, the two kinds of artifacts, which are those which distinguish us from the animal world, have appeared at the same time of the history of civilization; in fact, the person, in the course of the history, has never produced linguistic artifacts without producing, at the same time, material artifacts and viceversa:

Man could not have worked at any object if not by communicating, from a linguistic point of view, with other workers (...); and, on the contrary, the linguistic communication supposes a world of real objects which the speech refers to (Rossi Landi, 1968, p. 154).

So, the idea of an antecedence of the dialogue in the development of the communication finds a confirmation in the original need for cooperation among the individuals. In the perspective of the idea of the language, as a means in order to come into connection with the world through the relationship with the others, Vygotskij's thought is well integrated: with his reflections on the child language, he revealed how the language, in its evolutionary path, goes through a first stage, the *external language*, through which the child starts organizing a form of communication with the others. Whereas Rossi-Landi lingered over the dialogue as a common dimension between material employment and linguistic employment, Vygotskij lingered over the connection between thought and language through a progressive development of the same language starting from an initial dialogic dimension;

The main function of the language, both in children and adults, is the communication, the social contact. The very first child's language is, therefore, essentially social. Initially it is all-inclusive and cross-functional; subsequently, its functions become differentiated (Vygotskij, 1956, p. 37).

In the ambit of Vygotskij's thought, the other two differentiations are established by the egocentric language and by the internal language, which are two linguistic dimensions that are connected between them, also because the internal language represents a natural evolution of the egocentric language. Then, the verbal thought delineates the time in which the meanings of the words move towards more complex dimensions thanks, above all, to a structural change of the individual conscience of the person who speaks; the verbal thought tends to express:

All the thoughts, sensations and even the deepest reflections, with only the word, which is obviously untranslatable on the level of the external language and, semantically, it is not reducible to the meaning that it usually has (p. 219).

If compared to the external language, the egocentric language represents the path from interpsychic dimensions to those intrapsychic ones, that is, from a social activity to an individual one. As far as the internal language is concerned, instead, in it a restructuring of the same language materializes both at a semantic level and at a syntactic level; in other terms, the objectives that the external language pursues have to do with the establishment of communication relationships; those which are pursued by the internal language, instead, have the objective to furnish the adequate

word to the thought, the development path of which goes from the social to the individual sphere. In Vygotskij's viewpoint, thought and language are not part of a unique dimension:

They are rather similar to two circles which intersect but which do not overlap entirely, since (...) there is a pre-linguistic phase in the use of the thought and a pre-intellectual phase in the use of the language. In those parts in which the two circles overlap, thought and language become "the key in order to understand the nature of the human conscience" (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000, p. 44).

Therefore, the dialogic nature is the first and important expression of the child language, which, secondly, has to be internalized if it has to become an important means for the flow of the thought. In such game of returns between thought and language, the meaning of the word becomes an expression of the thought but not through the dialogue, which is "a form of immediate and not premeditated communication"; so:

To the structural simplicity of the dialogue the complexity of the monologue opposes, which introduces the verbal facts in the sphere of the conscience and that makes them a subject of great attention (Vygotskij, 1956, p. 204).

So, what it is useful for our discussion is that, according to Vygotskij, the dialogic activity represents only a sort of the initial part of the communication game when, that is to say, the thought has not fully reached its awareness yet, which, after, is reached in the internalization of the linguistic dimension.

That's why it is possible to affirm that the dialogic activity fully pervades the experience of those subjects who are involved in the communication dimension on two levels: on the one hand speaking is an activity which has to do with the dimension of the enunciation – we talk about something to somebody –, on the other, the same enunciation is a dimension which modifies the individuals concerned, thus transforming them in "links of a chain", who find a continuous redefinition in the relationship with the others, both at a synchronic and a diachronic level.

In this perspective of "original dimensions" of the communication, after the dialogue, also the narrative occupies a space of experience of knowledge and acknowledgement of the "I" in the community. In fact, in the individual's history, narrating has been one of the first modalities through which the individual has started wondering about the sense of the world and life. Morin, in his book *"Il paradigma perduto. Che cos'è la natura umana"* (*"The lost paradigm. What is the human nature"*, Note of the Translator) affirmed that the birth of the *homo sapiens* starts when, for the first time, man instituted the ritual of the burial with the first pictorial signs in caves; in fact, in this way, thanks to the dimension of the image and symbol, the person escaped the fear of death:

it is in this 'anthropological rift' that the narration originates, a narration which breaks the person's primigenial unity and destines him/her forever to confront himself/herself with another dimension. Burying dead people is the final and initial act of the long story of life and death and of death which becomes again life in another form or in another place. It is the first trace of all those infinite series of tales where the words struggle for 'telling' life against death (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000, pp. 57, 58).

Also graffiti inside caves have represented, for the person, the possibility of realizing a vision of the world, which is alternative to the real one, in order to face everyday life with greater serenity:

Each human being, without knowing it, knows that he/she is a *self which may be narrated*, who is absorbed in the spontaneous self-narration of his/her memory (Cavarero, 1997, p. 48).

Therefore, if the dialogue and narration may be considered the original, primogenital forms of communicating, today with the advent of digital media which seems to nourish dreams, hopes and utopias of a community, that hopes that the unlimited communication may be a synonym of deep relationships, what dimensions may these two original forms of communicating assume? If, as we have seen, dialogue has been useful for the individual in order to survive and the narration in order to live (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000), today, in a certain sense, these two dimensions continue to give rhythm to the person's life. Whereas media images, as graffiti, show the person the possibility to create a world, which is analogous to the real one in order to better face the real world, the network communication offered by the Internet is always the result of that individual's innate need to tell and tell about himself/herself; also in the media multiform environment *one survives and lives*; the two concepts and their respective dimensions, dialogue and narration, have only changed their "patterns".

#### **4. The desire of community and digital emotions: Educational reflections**

It is useful to reflect on the fact that communication has implied and, still today, continues to imply a social relationship, in the course of which people involved in the communication game share particular meanings; therefore, talking about sharing of meanings leads the reflection on the sense of communication in terms of a dimension which, from a teleological point of view, is aimed at constructing a community. According to Ferdinand Tönnies (1963), the community is a dimension in which a group of people live together and share the same feelings, the same origin, the same fundamental teleological aspiration, that is, staying together; therefore, the community is a natural, intimate, union which is created on the basis of a mutual understanding. On the contrary, society life is public and "artificial", since it is built on interest relationships.

This distinction between community and society has been reexamined by Nancy, according to whom it is wrong to compare the concept of community to the concept of society, since there is not any lost community to be rebuilt; society has only replaced a kind of community, the “participatory” community, that is a group of different people who, maybe, lived – even if there was a stricter and poorer social structure if compared to that one of our current society – some intense communication experience, since they had values and ideals in common; Nancy writes (1995):

The community, far from being what the society would have lost or infringed, is what happens – a matter, an event, an imperative – starting from the society (p. 37).

That’s why it is not necessary to regret a lost community but, thanks to the multiform world of digital media, it is useful to try to reconstruct a new original community; there is no a “subject” who interacts with other “subjects”, but there is a “singularity” which emerges inside a community. Therefore, since singularities do not presume to be eternal, they share limited dimensions of their living; it’s a:

Logic of limit, a logic of what belongs neither to the pure inside, nor to the pure outside, a logic which characterizes the human being, through whom it places itself between the crowd’s breakup and the group aggregation, and both are possible, virtual, close at any time. This suspension characterizes the human being with: a relationship without relationship, a simultaneous exposure to the relationship and to the essence of the relationship (pp. 182, 183).

Then, according to Nancy, community and society intertwine, since individual freedom is always:

“Freedom in common”, which is fulfilled in the practice of the community life, that is in the “communication of distinct singular human beings, who exist as such only through communication” (p. 210).

A so intended idea of community may be compared to the dimension of online communities which, even if they do not have the constitutive elements of traditional communities, first among everything the rooting on the territory, preserve “the gift of the mutual relationship”.

In the ambit of online life, groups of people meet in order to exchange information, establish relationships. This situation often arises on the basis of feelings of strong solidarity. In this respect, the Web is as if it were a flow in flood, which overflows with information, knowledge, emotions to be lived and shared, different points of view also with respect to the same issue. In order to avoid the risk of a cognitive overload, some time ago, Lévy (2000) had proposed the metaphor of the “small arks”, that is some virtual communities in a continuous flux, which are fluid, light, that may represent, in the ambit of this information sea without boundaries, some lifelines from the “overflow” of information.

In the ambit of these small arks in a continuous flux, individuals shall have to be committed to reconstructing some “partial totalities”, according to one’s own criteria of knowledge; this “fleet” of small arks represents:

A myriad of small distinguished, open, temporary totalities, which are obtained through an active filtering and which are perpetually reconsidered by collective intelligence groups which cross, are so close, collide or intertwine on the wide water of the deluge of information (Lévy, 2000, p. 157).

The newness of his thought may be deduced from the fact that the small arks, since they are living human *communities*, allow knowledge to circulate, even if in a context of dynamism and transience; such arks represent the place where knowledge may be continuously increased and redefined; they are not utopic, even if they are not positioned in any place and in any physical space. Therefore, if the fundamental sense of communication is making community, may online communities, which arise on the basis of an exclusive communication connection, be considered just like real communities?

In the community, the subjects do not find a principle of identification – and neither they find an aseptic fenced area within which it is possible to establish a transparent communication or, maybe, the contents to be communicated. They only find that nothingness, that distance, that unrelatedness, which makes them be missing to themselves. Community is not a way of being of the individual, but his/her exposure to what interrupts the closure and reverse him/her on the outside (Esposito, 1998, p. XVI-XVII).

Therefore, the community, as a *vacuum* but also as a *desire*; in that sense, “not belonging to” may represent the incentive to expose himself/herself to the others and so “interrupt” the closure of the “I” (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000). In other terms, this situation of not-belonging to might be seen as the representation towards *externality* which, today, seems the most significant dimension of the time; such path towards externalization would include also the community that:

Through the relationship to the others makes the subject “other” also *vis-à-vis* himself/herself, (thus letting the community become) the movement of his/her (...) flux, which is always and only “other” (Moroncini, 1991, p. 71).

Today the person finds himself/herself living a situation of deep complexity and criticality: this original ethical relationship which connects individuals, thus creating a community, transmits a power to the same community, which is less and less the product of a natural inclination and more and more the result of a mythical construction (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000). Today this sort of nostalgia of the community just identifies with a nostalgia of the myth of origin:



Told through the word which wants to be sacred, binding, innocent and that, gradually, may be transformed in a speech which generates fear and anguish of the responsibility<sup>1</sup>. (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000, p. 159).

In the complex current society that sense of sacredness, of reunion is not assigned to the word any more, but the word finds itself living in a dimension made of games of simulation, images which have replaced its original semantic meaning; the myth is as if it had been interrupted and the idea of community which survives is the idea of a desire, of a return to an age which does not exist any longer. This state of interruption does not want to mean annulment of the community but, rather, it wants to affirm the coming out of a “passion of the community”, which overcomes any limit, thus avoiding the danger to appear as a closure, as an accomplishment (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000).

In fact, even if online communities lack those characteristics of traditional communities, this state of nomadism not only represents a “laceration” towards *externality*, but it also avoids the obstacle which, instead, might be typical of traditional communities, that is that of transmitting a form of “closed” knowledge. If it is true that the ultimate goal of communication is that of “connecting”, of facilitating the contact, then the state of “infinity” of online communities would well align with the deepest sense of the human communication, that is, that sense of never crystallizing in a hypothetical balance, because what is “finite” may not be considered life.

Talking about passion as a need for community seems to be a dimension which characterizes the community between:

The absolute rooting in an ‘idealized’ nature and the total exposure to the non – place of utopia. (In such perspective) it becomes a point of transit and, therefore, an ephemeral point, but, at the same time, a necessary point of transit: a space of inclusion and exclusion, abode and journey, permanence and peregrination, the ones and the others together and neither of the two (Piromallo Gambardella, 2000, p. 63).

In other terms, the so intended community appears as a *mediation*, which is, above all, intended as a space of sharing among opposite dimensions: individual vs. society, local vs. global, nostalgia vs. utopia; such opposite dimensions, just for their aforementioned characteristics of the community, never stop in a balance, but, dialectally, they appear as a situation of a continuous renegotiation of their meanings on the basis of the necessities and needs, which continuously emerge and change in online nomadism:

Being is essentially being *in* common. Being *in* common means that singular individuals are, show up, appear only since they make their appearance, are exposed,



introduced or offered to one another. This appearance is not added to their being, but it is what in which their being reaches the being (Nancy, 1995, p. 123).

## Bibliography

- [1] Bauman Z. (2003). *Intervista sull'identità*, Publishers Laterza: Rome-Bari.
- [2] Boccia Artieri G. (2012). *Stati di connessione. Pubblici, cittadini e consumatori nella (Social) Web Society*. FrancoAngeli: Milan. boyd d. (2007). *Why Youth (Heart) Social Web Sites: The role of Webbed Publics in Teenager Social Life*, in D. Buckingham (edited by), *Youth, Identity and Digital Media*. MIT Press: Cambridge.
- [3] Buber M. (19589). *Il principio dialogico*. Editions of Community: Milan.
- [4] Cantelmi T., Grifo L. G. (2002). *La mente virtuale. L'affascinante ragnatela di Internet*. San Paolo: Cinisello
- [5] Cavarero A. (1997). *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti*. Feltrinelli: Milan.
- [6] Esposito R. (1998). *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*. Einaudi: Turin.
- [7] Ferraresi M. (2009). *La vetrina digitale*, in A. Abruzzese, M. Ferraresi (edited by) *Next. Identità tra consumo e comunicazione*, Lupetti: Bologna.
- [8] Granese A. (2008). *La conversazione educativa. Eclisse o rinnovamento della ragione pedagogica*. Armando: Rome.
- [9] Ito M. (2008). Introduction, In KAZYS V. (ed.). *Webbed Publics*. MIT Press: Boston.
- [10] John, N.A. (2013). The Social Logics of Sharing. *The Communication Review*, vol. 16(3), 113-131).
- [11] La Marca A. (2016), *Competenza digitale e saggezza a scuola*. Brescia: Publishing house: Morcelliana
- [12] Laeng M. (1982). *Informazione, comunicazione, educazione*, in C. Stroppa (edited by), *Il bambino come comunicazione*. FrancoAngeli: Milan.
- [13] Lévy P. (2000). *Cybercultura. Gli usi sociali delle nuove tecnologie*. Feltrinelli: Milan.
- [14] Massaro D., Grotti A. (2000). *Il filo rosso di Sofia. Etica, comunicazione e strategie conoscitive nell'epoca di Internet*, Bollati Boringhieri: Turin.
- [15] Moroncini B. (1991). *La comunità impossibile*, in B. Moroncini, F.C. Papparo, G. Borrello (edited by), *L'ineguale umanità. Comunità, esperienza, differenza sessuale*. Liguori: Naples.
- [16] Nancy J. (1995). *La comunità inoperosa*. Cronopio: Naples.
- [17] Ong W. G (1986). *Oralità e scrittura: le tecnologie della parola*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- [18] Pati L. (2000). (edited by), *La giovinezza. Un nuovo stadio per l'educazione*. Publishing house: La Scuola: Brescia.
- [19] Piomallo Gambardella A. (2000). *Le sfide della comunicazione*. Laterza: Rome-Bari.

- [20] Prensky, M. (2001). «Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants». *On the Horizon*, Vol. 9 No. 5, Cambridge: University Press.
- [21] Rossi-Landi F. (1968). *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*. Bompiani: Milan.
- [22] Salzano D., (2000) (edited by), *Comunicazione ed educazione: incontro tra due culture*. Naples: L'Isola dei Ragazzi.
- [23] Thompson J. B. (1998). *Mezzi di comunicazione e modernità: una teoria sociale dei media*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- [24] Tönnies, *Comunità e società* (1963). Editions of Community.
- [25] Vittadini N. (2018). *Social Media Studies. I social media alla soglia della maturità: storia, teorie e temi*. FrancoAngeli: Milan.
- [26] Vygotskij L. S. (1966). *Pensiero e linguaggio*. Giunti-Barbera: Florence.
- [27] Watzlawick P., Beavin J. H., Jackson D. D. (1971). *Pragmatica della comunicazione umana*. Astrolabio: Rome.
- [28] Wolton D. (1997). *Penser la communication* Flammarion: Paris.
- [29] Wolton D. (2001). *Internet e poi?...Teoria critica dei nuovi media*. Publishing house Dedalo: Bari.
- [30] Wolton D. (2006). «Intervista pubblicata» *Nuova Umanità n.165/166- May-August 2006*.

# **The Effects on the Socio-Emotional State of Students in the National Exams in Greece from the Covid-19 Pandemic - Pilot Research**

**Sousanna-Maria Nikolaou**

Associate Professor, Department of Primary Education  
University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of internment and isolation imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on the socio-emotional status of students preparing for and taking national exams in July 2020. The main result of the study showed a weakness of consciousness and student stress due mainly to the inadequacy of social relationships, daily social contact with people who managed the same situation highlighting the importance of social capital and socialization in dealing with real life situations. The research found an unprecedented stressful situation of students that manifested itself with a lot of intensity and explosive situations (crying before and after exams, provocative behavior, great anger, disorganization, withdrawal desire, tension, conflicts, physical discomfort, intense anxiety and stress). The research also aims to conduct a scientific discussion of the conclusions regarding the conditions created for young people in the context of internment and isolation from any living communication with their classmates and teachers and the consequences in general in the event that this situation will continue into the next school year, as well as the study of ways in which a similar condition can be avoided in the next phase of the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, students, socio-emotional state, exams, Greece

## **Introduction**

### **1. Social status and Covid -19**

The special living condition that developed after the outbreak of Covid-19 around the world necessitated the adaptation to new data in family and personal life as well as in the professional field (Adolph et al., 2020). Regarding the educational process, despite the use of distance education, so as not to lose the child's contact with the educational reality, a number of problems and limitations were identified that were related to the teaching of cognitive subjects and educational inequalities and social capital (friendship social networks) and the social and emotional dimension of learning. The

emptiness of social relations and the emotional load of the days of internment at home were strong factors to cause problems in the social adjustment and recovery of students, especially those who were preparing for the national exams, but also to reflect on the ways in which they could be supported by teachers through their role as significant others in case we experience a new wave of virus outbreak again from September 2020 (Viner et al., 2020).

Children and adolescents during their stay at home experienced significant changes in multiple levels of their learning and psychosocial development. It is a fact that each person reacts differently to the same situation and each difficulty affects each person differently depending on his psycho-social-emotional state and his behavior. All this new social reality with the main feature of staying and internment at home, the "ban" of socializing, was expected to affect the behavior of people and much more of young teenagers, who rely heavily on social networks and friendships for self-recognition through the acceptance of others, who in fact in view of their entrance exams to university experience on a daily basis great stress and anxiety (Papadimitriou, 2015). They may have disorganization, tension, difficulty concentrating, intense irritability, increased conflict, physical discomfort and may feel intense anxiety, stress, anger manifested by crying (Konstantopoulou et al. 2015). However, it is possible that these reactions are both normal and expected due to the condition they are experiencing. But what if they persist in intensity, frequency, duration and degree and affect the daily life and functionality of the young person? Then the person needs support from special staff to strengthen and promote his mental resilience in order to be able to recover. According to Hadjichristou (2020: 10): "most children and adolescents in the long run will be able to cope psychologically, despite their difficult experiences by developing and / or evolving internal mechanisms for dealing with difficult situations" with the help and support of parents and significant others.

Mental resilience, however, includes an important chapter in social relationships. Friendly social networks, which were severely affected by internment and staying at home, had a significant impact on the young adult's self-confidence and optimism, active participation, values and expectations, and ultimately on his or her mental resilience (Hadjichristou, 2020: 3).

The aim of this pilot study is to record and assess the consequences of the internment and isolation of young adults who were preparing for the national exams by Covid-19, in terms of their socio-emotional status.

## **2. The research**

### **2.1 Methodology**

#### *1. Participants*

The pilot research was attended by 12 high school students of the prefecture of Ioannina, 6 girls and 6 boys. In qualitative social research, research subjects are

deliberately selected in order to serve its objectives. Therefore, neither the participants nor many were random, but were selected to be appropriate for the information sought in order to interpret the subject under consideration (Mantzoukas, 2007). The participating students were selected on the basis of gender (there should be a ratio), based on their evaluation in the first quarter of study (over 18 with an excellent 20) and the relevant scientific field [Humanities, Law and Social Studies (3 students) Technological and Positive Studies (3 students), Health and Life Studies (3 students), Economics and Informatics Studies (3 students), Studies, Positive Sciences (3 students)].

## *2. Means of data collection*

The data collection tool was the semi-structured interview as the most reliable, because it does not impose a specific context on the interviewee and the researcher using a discussion axis can with appropriate manipulations examine the topic he wants in a way that seems natural and not forced (Nov- Kaltsouni, 2006, 46 et seq. ; Robson, 2007). The semi-structured interview consisting of 10 questions was used for data collection.

### Interview guide

For the implementation of the interviews, an interview guide was formed that includes individual questions, which attempt to answer the research questions and produce qualitative data on issues related to social capital, social relationships and the emotional state of the respondents. The interview guide followed the methodology of qualitative research with semistructured interviews. General thematic units and individual questions were constructed, which correspond to the thematic units, while at the same time the researcher had the flexibility to modify them (adaptation or change depending on the data that emerged) (Kyriazi, 2006; Isari & Pourkos, 2015). Prior to the survey and based on the guide, a pilot survey was conducted on four high school students (who did not participate in the final survey) in order to determine the appropriateness and adequacy of the questions. Pilot research has helped to avoid lengthy and ambiguous responses (Robson, 2007).

According to the objectives set for the qualitative research, the interview guide included 32 questions, which were divided into six thematic sections. Through them we sought the investigation of research questions and the production of quality data, so that the subsequent categorization records in a valid way the data necessary for the research. In the first thematic questions about the ways of communication and their frequency with friends and others before and after the pandemic. In the second the questions referred to the social activities (extracurricular) (type) of the respondents that were suspended or interrupted due to the pandemic. The third topic included questions related to the use of free time in the midst of a pandemic. In the fourth topic the questions referred to the ways of acceptance and reaction in view of the exams. The fifth topic included questions about the shortcomings identified by the respondents themselves during the pandemic and the sixth topic had questions about

social and friendship networks before the pandemic and in the midst of internment until the exams.

The interview process took place in July 2020 (live and through the use of social media). The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees (Kvale, 2008), were individual and lasted an average of 60 minutes. After the recording, the volume of data was organized, the views were grouped and categorized. The proposal that referred to the subject under consideration was used as a unit of measurement and an inductive system of categories and subcategories of coding the collected data was formed (Bonidis, 2004). The small number of the sample does not allow generalization of the results for the student population that wrote national exams in Greece in 2020.

### 3. Analysis of the answers

The transcripts of the interviews were categorized into sections that had already been formed by the researcher and were enriched by the analysis of the data. The following table describes the categories as they were formed from the processing of the answers and the coding:

*Table 1. Categories*

Means of Communication	Before Internment	With friends and classmates	At school At the tutoring school	12 12 11
			The w/d in the evenings Afternoon at leisure	9
		With teachers	At school In meetings in the afternoons (additional remedial teaching)	12 9
		After Internment	With friends and classmates	Social media Facebook, Instagram, Viber (initially every day and then a few days before the exams once a week), phone
		With teachers	In distance learning a few hours a week	12
	Activities banned due to the pandemic	Before Internment	Swimming Volleyball Basketball Ballet	3-4 times per week
After Internment		None	-	12
Allocation of free time	During Internment	Social Media (FB, Instagram...) TV NETFLIX movies Hiking with parents	Every day at first and a few days the exams rarely	12

How they reacted during the exams	Before the exams	Lots of stress, irritability, depression, and a lot of crying		12
	Right after the exams	Irritation, anxiety, crying		11

## 2.2 Discussion of the results

The usual ways of communication of students even those who are eagerly preparing for the national exams and their admission to the University are based on social relationships that have developed in friendly social networks mainly at school. Before being locked up and staying at home, students had daily social interactions with friends and classmates at school, in tutoring, on weekend nights and some even in their free time in the squares and neighborhood meetings. Characteristically they state: *"[...] I get away from the stress and reading I have when I meet my friends [...] we were seen every day at school, we talked about our problems and reading [...] but on Saturday afternoon in the square. .when we were all with my close ones; I forgot that I was taking national exams "*. But also important was the social relationship and social interaction on a daily basis at school with their teachers who were directly involved in the issues that occupied the students during the crucial year for them preparing for university admission. They state *"[...] we had a very good relationship and communication with our teachers in the core subjects. they were so positive and encouraged. they gave us strength. they explained to us the difficulties. it showed in their behavior and their look that they were anxious with us [...]" "it encouraged me that the teachers were cool and advised us how to manage our mistakes [...]"*. After being locked up at home, the students'

communication with each other and with their friends was initially limited to social media and the telephone, which as they approached the exams became quite limited, while with their teachers it became even more limited to distance learning for a short time. They report features *"[...] well that there is both Facebook and Instagram and so we could send a message... of course it does not compare. how long to sit on the computer? We also had parents constantly shouting about using the computer [...]" "We also lost contact with the teachers ... fortunately I also went to a tutoring center and so when we were excluded we did a video conference. but it was not the same"*.

Students seem to have enough social contact activities in team sports even when preparing for exams which gives them further opportunities to socialize in collective activities. The majority of the sample in their free time participated in groups such as swimming, volleyball, basketball and dance, from which they were excluded due to a pandemic, a fact that was taken very negatively by them. *" [...] I lost all my friends from there (sc.swimming) [...] for me swimming was important because I got rid of my daily stress and I had made friends who discussed other topics outside of school "*. *"With the pandemic I stayed home, no basketball, no friends; complete inactivity ... boring"*.



On the contrary, free time was divided into, in their opinion, not so enjoyable activities, which were not comparable to those they had before incarceration, but were solutions of necessity. *"What should I do in my free time va I went on FB, Instagram, I sent messages to my friends via Viber [...] at first on a daily basis. "Then I got bored. I felt that there was no point of contact. What else could we say all the same." "I was watching movies on Netflix[.] I was waiting to fill the time [...] at first it seemed perfect, it made me forget. Then I got bored.. if you do not have your friends to talk, to comment [...] what to see [...] It was more pleasant when I went out with my parents to walk. We introduced them twice a week ". "From one point onwards I was just sitting on the couch [.] complete inactivity [...]. I didn't want to do anything [...]"*

All this condition of internment, forced socialization and complete inactivity, which most of the students in our sample seem to have ended up, led to a lack of mental resilience that manifested itself during the exams with behaviors of uncontrollable irritability, anxiety, stress and crying. Features state:

*"I was very irritated before and after the exams, even though I had read and written very well [...] I do not know why I was crying all the time [...]" "I was very intense before and after. And to say that I was not read [.] everything else. My stomach ached for days after [...] without any organic cause. I also went to the doctor. "" I was constantly worried. I was also angry ..very angry [...] I could not concentrate on what I was writing, I was generally bored with all this, I mean the exams. On the third day, even though I had written well the previous days, I did not even want to go to write [...] my mother almost dragged me Xa I also took out my anger [...] that is, we also had a conflict [.]that is, how to say I was bored. . no interest".*

### **3. Discussion of the results**

Social contact, social relationships and peer groups are a very important way of socializing. Peer groups have a special power to socialize and activate (strengthen) key areas of young people's socio-emotional status and mental resilience. Acceptance enhances the child's selfconfidence, develops the ability to communicate with others, to accept boundaries and obligations (Bullen & Onyx, 1998; Coleman, 1988). In this way he learns to organize his own space and time, gains faith in himself and in personal sources of power, in order to recover from difficulties faster and more effectively. (Nikolaou, 2009; Parsons, 1959; Hadjichristou, 2020, Giavrimis & Nikolaou, 2020). By participating in groups, children develop the ability to work with people who have the same responsibilities and the same rights and develop initiatives (Bourdieu 1986). The feeling that they are taking responsibility for actions especially strengthens the feeling that they are controlling the situation and gaining calm. This is especially important for children, when they feel involved in school activities, when they participate with daily social contacts in discussions about common problems such as exams (Nikolaou, 2009; Hadjichristou, 2020).



When students operate in a framework of friendship based on common desires and interests, they shape their self-image and rely on the driving force of values and deeper beliefs with which they make their choices, prioritize their goals, set goals and seek and find ways to make them happen with confidence and consistency (Hadjichristou, 2020: 4 et seq.; Moolenaar et al. 2009: 13-17).

Under these circumstances, any problem or adverse condition of not achieving the goals does not lead the person to behaviors similar to those found in this research process (such as desire to withdraw, difficulty concentrating, tension, stress, intense anxiety, anger, conflict and even physical annoyances), because the person has the power to revise his goals and adjust them, so that he is happy with his life, not to embody the adverse condition and to continue to derive satisfaction and give meaning to his life. The daily communication and social relationships between students and between students and teachers encourage them to realize how important it is for them to believe in themselves and their strengths and to find interest in their lives. All students who take university entrance exams experience intense stress and anxiety, and often embody it, but their social relationships, daily communication and collaboration at school with friends, classmates and teachers are very helpful (Kent et al., 2019).. The results of the research showed that children after a long period of stay at home in the context of significant changes in multiple levels of socialization showed abnormal behaviors (perhaps expected in the unprecedented condition we are experiencing), but showed once again how important is the social contact and the development and maintenance of the living social relations of man. Research in the period of Covid 19 (Giavrimis & Nikolaou, 2020) on students' social and friendship networks and how they affected students in the midst of a pandemic, found that high social capital can create the right conditions for positive social relationships and interactions of students, for the development of social trust, as a necessary condition for cooperation, productive action and peer behavior. The consequences of the high social capital of students in the pandemic period were particularly positive, emphasizing once again that the development of social and friendly networks and social interaction for the development of initiatives and social trust are key elements of human existence (Almeida et al., 2019; Peng, 2019; Mishra, 2020; Koutra et al., 2020).

#### **4. Suggestions**

The disease caused by the Covid-19 virus is not over. We still have a long way to go before it can be treated with a vaccine. There is a possibility that the observed behaviors persist in terms of intensity or frequency in the daily life of children. There is also the possibility that in case of internment, banning of social gatherings and finally "de-socialization" in a possible reoutbreak of the pandemic, the same behaviors may be found in higher intensity and in younger students. For these reasons we must reflect and become aware of children and ensure conditions that will prevent such a possible development. It is therefore very important that important

others, parents and educators, are informed and sensitized to encourage the development of continuous communication in various ways of social groups, even with a redefinition of the way of socialization according to how to access the new data of the youth era information and communication technologies. The conditions that are formed are also influenced by the methods of socialization and that is why it is very important to examine in detail how the factors that play an important role in socialization can be utilized through technology in the best possible way for children to cope by developing internal coping mechanisms the lack of living social contact and the difficult situations involved with the contribution and support of parents and "important" adults.

## References

- [1] Adolph, C., Amano, K., Bang-Jensen, B., Fullman, N., & Wilkerson, J. (2020). Pandemic politics: Timing state-level social distancing responses to COVID-19. *medRxiv*. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.03.30.20046326>
- [2] Almeida, D. J., Byrne, A. M., Smith, R. M., & Ruiz, S. (2019). How relevant is grit? The importance of social capital in first-generation college students' academic success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119854688>
- [3] Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York, Greenwood
- [4] Bullen, P. & Onyx, J. (1998). *Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in NSW*. <http://www.mapl.com.au/a2.htm>
- [5] Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital., *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.
- [6] Giavrimis, P & Nikolaou, S.M (2020). The Greek University Student's Social Capital during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *European Journal of Education* 7, (8), pp. 1-16
- [7] Hadjichristou, Ch. (2020). *Back to school and problems of mental resilience after the result of staying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic Useful tips and activity forms*. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Psychology department School Psychology Laboratory. Online Available: <http://www.centerschoolpsych.psych.uoa.gr> (July2, 2020)
- [8] Isari, F., & Pourkos, M. (2015). *Qualitative research methodology*. [E-book] Athens: Association of Greek Academic Libraries. Retrieved August 15, 2018, from <http://hdl.handle.net/11419/5826> (in GREEK)
- [9] Iosifidis, Th. (2008). *Qualitative research methods in the social sciences*. Athens: Critique.(in GREEK)
- [10] Iosifidis, Th. (2017). *Qualitative research methods and epistemology of the social sciences*. Thessaloniki: Tziola. (in GREEK)
- [11] Kvale, S.(2008). *Doing interviews*. Sage.
- [12] Kent, C., Rechavi, A., & Rafaeli, S. (2019). The Relationship Between Offline

- Social Capital and Online Learning Interactions. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 1186- 1211.
- [13] Koutra, K., Roy, A. W., & Kokaliari, E. D. (2020). The effect of social capital on nonsuicidal self-injury and suicidal behaviors among college students in Greece during the current economic crisis. *International Social Work*, 63(1), 100-112.
- [14] Konstantopoulou, F., Skarvelaki, D. Makrigiannaki, M., Steletou, S., Tzamali, K. & Andreadakis N. (2015). The stress of evaluation. *Panhellenic Conference of Educational Sciences*, 721-731. [DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/edusc.278>] (in GREEK)
- [15] Mantzoukas S., 2007. Qualitative research in six easy steps: Epistemology, methods and presentation. *Nursing*, 46 (2), 176-187. (in GREEK)
- [16] Bonidis, K. (2004). *The content of the textbook as an object of research: a temporal examination of the relevant research and methodological approaches*. Athens: Metaichmio (in GREEK)
- [17] Mishra, S. (2020). Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on underrepresented' students. *Educational Research Review*, 29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100307>
- [18] Moolenaar, N. M., Daly, A. J., & Slegers, P. (2009). Ties with potential: social network structure and innovation in Dutch elementary schools. *European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI)*, Amsterdam, August, 25-29.
- [19] Nova-Kaltsouni, Ch. (2006). *Empirical research methodology in the social sciences*. Athens: Gutenberg (in GREEK)
- [20] Papadimitriou, G. (2015). The effect of the system of entrance exams in universities on the composition of ABST students. *ABST Scientific Yearbook*, 10. (in GREEK)
- [21] Parson, T. (1959), The school class as a social system: some of its functions in American society, *Harvard Educational Review* 29,4, 297-318
- [22] Peng, M. Y. P. (2019). Testing the mediating role of student learning outcomes in the relationship among students' social capital, international mindsets, and employability. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 28(3), 229-237.
- [23] Robson, C. (2007). Real world research. A tool for social scientists and professional researchers. (Dalakou, V., & Vasilikou, K., translation). Athens: Gutenberg (in GREEK)
- [24] Viner, R. M., Russell, S. J., Croker, H., Packer, J., Ward, J., Stansfield, C., Mytton, O., Bonell, C. & Booy, R. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4, 397-404.

# **Confrontation of the Structuring Logic Previous Question, Next Question of the Teacher in the Formulation of a Statement in Mathematics to that of the Student in the Resolution of the Problem Posed**

**Anon N'Guessan**

Lecturer in Educational Sciences

**N'Goran N'Faissoh Franck Stephane**

PhD, Criminal Psychology, Felix  
Houphouet-Boigny University (Abidjan)

## **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the correlation of the student's progress in solving a given problem with the logic of the teacher in the layout of the questions asked. The research was conducted in the government's secondary schools and colleges in the district of Abidjan and involved 453 participants, including 423 student and 30 teachers. The data was collected based on a survey questionnaire and then analysed based on a quantitative and qualitative point of view. The results of the study focused on the concordance of the student's progress in solving a given problem with the teacher's logic in the layout of the questions asked. The study shows that students' performance in mathematics is not dependent on how often they follow the order of the question in the statement.

**Keywords:** previous question, next question, teacher, mathematical statement, solving a problem

## **Introduction**

Mathematics is known as a black sheep for many pupils and students because of the difficulties they experience to appropriate it. The explanatory factors for these difficulties are endogenous and / or exogenous because they are psychological, ontogenetic, epistemological, social, didactic and pedagogical. But didactic and pedagogical factors occupy an important position in this list and the evaluative practices of teachers constitute an aspect not to be neglected.

In fact, assessment, which is an essential component of the teaching-learning process, holds a significant position in the causes that affect student performance in numerous

disciplines, particularly in mathematics. As Legendre (2001) says, *"Teaching, learning and assessment are not considered in sequence, as distinct moments from the pedagogical process, but rather in their dynamic interaction within this process"*. Gerard and Roegiers (2011) make the same observation by saying that *"the teaching-learning process has resolutely become a teaching-learning-assessment process"*. However, the consistency between these three components creates many difficulties. This is noted in the words of Françoise Munck (2014) according to which *"teachers often regret that current assessments result in findings which only make it difficult for students to learn about their progress and insufficiently about the nature of their errors. They also deplore not allowing certain pupils to show in evaluation what they know how to do, the latter being too often confronted with situations which require learning which they have not yet constructed"*.

Note that an effective learning evaluation requires an instrument that allows the collection of relevant, valid and reliable information. In other words, an instrument that does not have these qualities can significantly affect the student's production because it can induce cognitive biases in the student and impair the teacher's judgment. As Barbier (1984) defines it, *"to evaluate is to pronounce a value judgment by establishing a gap between a referent (what we are referring to, an ideal, a standard, an objective, even a referential that we can qualify quickly catalog of available references) which is not necessarily stable, stabilized or expressed, deposited on a support, and a summary (a performance, a student's copy, an oral or any production, durable or not)"*. This definition highlights the confrontation between the two main actors (pupil, teacher) of a teaching-learning situation where each of them develops a strategy specific to him.

Thus, *the development and communication of the referral upstream of the referral request becomes essential* (Fagnant A. & al, 2017). Because this confrontation is marked by the dominant position of the master as pointed out by Munck F, Pilard P. and Terrien D. (2014), for whom *"Evaluation is a moment of meeting between the evaluator (the teacher) and the assessor (the student) or, more precisely between the assessor and the production of the assessed. This meeting is unbalanced. It is indeed the teacher who creates the subject, sets his expectations and analyzes the production. The pupil can find himself in the position of having to produce while trying to respond to more or less nebulous expectations for him, position to say the least uncomfortable"*. This implies that any failure at the level of the teacher in the development of the assessment will have a negative impact on the student's production. Because the ability to solve a problem indicates a good level of mastery of the knowledge on which the statement relates. This is why problem solving is central to mathematics education programs.

Indeed, *"Problem solving is the main criterion for mastering knowledge in all areas of mathematics, but it is also the means of ensuring its appropriation which guarantees its meaning."* (Couchoux C. 2005). However, only a well structured and syntactically

correct statement can ensure a good investment and a consolidation of the learner's achievements when solving a problem. However, many problem statements contain errors and even inconsistencies in the organization of the information they contain. This is sometimes due to the difficulty for some teachers to build valid instruments due to a lack of skills in the evaluation of learning. Indeed, many teachers are not trained in the methods of assessing learning. These are even more numerous in sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus, the evaluation practices of the majority of teachers in secondary and higher education establishments in Cote d'Ivoire are modeled on those that were applied by their teachers during their school and university courses. It is noted that often no clearly defined criterion is taken into account in the evaluation of learning. The development of an effective evaluation presupposes the definition of relevant criteria with appropriate indicators. As a result, Brassard (2012) formulated *six criteria that should be met in order to be able to design effective assessments, which measure what they are supposed to measure, that is, learning objectives*. Among these criteria is the *use of clear questions and instructions in order to properly formulate our expectations for our students*. This presupposes consistency in the arrangement of these questions.

These should be posed in an order that can facilitate the student's development of effective strategies for providing adequate responses. To understand the factors behind a student's poor performance during an assessment, a list of the main diagnoses that can be inferred was drawn up by Musial, M., Pradere, F., & Tricot, A. (2012) who indicate that the student may not be able to complete an activity that is asked of him if he "mobilizes other knowledge instead". More explicitly, *"The student tries to complete the task but does not succeed because the knowledge that he mobilizes is not relevant. In this situation, the diagnosis can be directed towards a very superficial element: it is a word of the statement, a simple aspect of the instruction, which led him to mobilize an inappropriate knowledge"*. This shows that certain aspects of the statement of the problem posed can induce understanding bias in the person being evaluated. Indeed, the results of the work of certain authors such as Coquin and Viennot (2000) have shown that *the same arithmetic problem can be associated with different success rates depending on the formulation characteristics of its statement*.

Fayol, Abdi and Gombert (1987) have also shown that presenting arithmetic problems orally, the question of which is placed at the head rather than classically at the end of the sentence, improves resolution performance. There is often a failure when the activity carried out by the subject is out of phase with the assigned task or when the subject does not succeed in mobilizing all the resources (psychological, physiological, neuro-informational, etc.) necessary to achieve the prescribed task.

Note that the task indicates what is to be done, the activity indicates what is done. Thus, the task and the activity materialize the teacher-learner confrontation.



These are building blocks of the teaching-learning dynamic. And it happens in a school problem that the gap between the assigned task and the perception of it by the student is large. *"By problem we must understand, in the broad sense given to it by the psychologist, any situation in which we must discover relationships, develop activities of exploration, hypothesis and verification, to produce a solution."* (VERGNAUD G., 1986). A mathematic problem can be defined as a statement about objects and structures, requiring a subject to build coherent reasoning to highlight the relationships between these elements, in order to achieve a specific goal. In class, the tasks assigned are generally didactic problems. For De VANSSAY S. and De BLAVOUS S. (2010), *a problem in mathematics is therefore for the student a situation in which he must answer the question asked using mathematical tools and / or intellectual skills used in mathematics. He carries out this task using the information given, explicitly or not, in the statement and his experience in problem solving.* According to the Definitions Dico (2011), *a problem of this kind must expect three basic elements: the data necessary to solve it (always explicit), the method or the relationship between the data (which is what student must verify) and the expected result (which is achieved after following certain reasoning rules and assumptions or even hypotheses arising from the data).* Several elements are involved in solving a problem. *Among the variables likely to influence, problem solving, special attention must be paid to the formulation of statements. Even if it is difficult to dissociate this formulation from the relational structures themselves, certain forms of statements seem to make the structure of a problem clearer than others, and therefore easier to represent for the subject* (Jean Brun, 1990). A problem situation in the school environment inevitably generates an interpretation on the part of the student. This interpretation of the problem posed leads to the subject's representation of the perceived task and results in all of the procedures implemented to build the solution. *To solve the problem, it is necessary to build a good representation of the model and therefore modify its interpretation (initial, intermediate and final states) to match the space of the problem and the space of the task.* (Mostefaoui K., 2016). This leads to the following questions and conjectures:

## **Research questions, objectives and hypotheses**

### **Research questions**

Does the arrangement of the questions in a given problem during a mathematics assessment influence the solving strategy deployed by the student to build the expected solution?

More precisely:

Can the order in which the questions are asked in a mathematical problem favor or hinder the student's success in building the solution?

Can the order in which the questions are asked in a math problem widen the gap between the assigned task and the student's perception of it?



Can the succession of questions in the statement of a problem cause a state of anxiety in the evaluated person, when it does not coincide with the path adopted by the latter?

By adopting an approach other than that planned by the teacher, can the student achieve the result expected by his teacher?

These questions shed light on the objectives of this study.

## **Research objectives**

### **Main objective:**

This study aims to analyze the correlation of the student's progress in solving a given problem with the teacher's logic in the arrangement of the questions asked.

### **Specific objectives:**

It is a question during this study of:

Define the metacognitive strategies implemented by the student to solve a given mathematical problem.

Describe the procedure for the teacher to develop a mathematical problem.

Show that the gap between the assigned task and the student's perception of the task is sometimes large.

Show that the succession of questions in the statement, when it does not coincide with the student's progress, can widen the gap between the prescribed task and the perceived task.

Establish a link between the poor performance in mathematics and the gap between the logic of resolution induced by the statement and that adopted by the student.

### **Research hypotheses**

#### **Main hypothesis**

Divergences sometimes arise between the student's logic in solving a given mathematical problem and that of the teacher in structuring the statement. And this is not without consequences for the student's performance.

#### **Secondary hypothesis 1**

The divergence between the teacher's logic in the structuring "previous question, next question" of the statement of a mathematical problem and that of the student in the resolution of this problem is a source of psychological disturbance in the latter.

#### **Secondary hypothesis 2**

The order of the questions in the statement of a mathematical problem, when it does not coincide with the student's cognitive path logic in solving this problem, widens the gap between the prescribed task and the perceived task.

### **Secondary hypothesis 3**

The poor performance in mathematics is due to the discrepancy between the logic of resolution induced by the statement and that of the student facing the problem posed.

To verify these hypotheses, the following approach was adopted.

### **Methodology**

#### **Study population**

The target population is all secondary school students from Cote d'Ivoire. But given the limited means at our disposal, the study population is all the students of public high schools and colleges in the Abidjan district. To do this, the following establishments were chosen: Classical high school of Abidjan, Holy Mary high school of Cocody (Abidjan), Municipal high school of Abobo (Abidjan) Modern high school of Port-Bouet (Abidjan) Municipal high school of Yopougon (Abidjan), Modern high school of d'Anyama.

#### **Study sample**

##### **Sampling method**

As mentioned above, the means at our disposal are quite limited. In addition, the time available for this study is quite short. Therefore we opted for a reasoned choice empirical sample. While this method offers the advantage of easy access to students, it is difficult to generalize the results to the study population.

Indeed, this type of sample is not always representative of the population. However, the investigators were asked to make relevant choices of subjects among the students present in the class. The selection of subjects was made from good students, average students and those in difficulty in mathematics. This can improve representativeness within the population.

##### **Description of the sample**

We recall that the study sample is empirical precisely with reasoned choice because the selection of subjects took into account their level of performance in mathematics. This sample is made up of pupils from high schools and colleges in the Abidjan district of the fourth, third, second, first and final grades. For the second cycle, the respondents were selected from series A<sup>1</sup>, C<sup>2</sup> and D<sup>3</sup>.

The sample consists of a total of 423 students. In addition to these, 30 mathematics teachers working in the schools selected for this study were selected to be asked about their procedures for developing problem statements in mathematics.

---

<sup>1</sup> A = Literature or letters department

<sup>2</sup> Sciences department

<sup>3</sup> Sciences department

## **Data collection instrument**

To be able to reach a large number of subjects, a survey questionnaire was used. The choice of this type of instrument obeys the idea of making a quantitative analysis. The questionnaire includes both closed and open questions.

Open questions are introduced to allow subjects to answer freely and above all to encourage a wealth of answers. This made it possible to carry out qualitative analyzes of certain responses.

## **Administration of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered to the students by teachers whom we contacted. These investigators selected students from classes they hold for the 2019-20 school year. As indicated above, the investigating teachers selected students on a trial basis taking into account the levels of difficulty in mathematics. The sample then contains pupils in difficulty, average pupils and those with a high level of performance in mathematics.

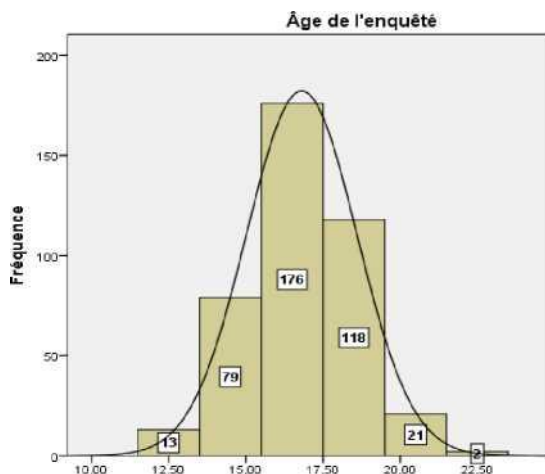
## **Data processing and analysis**

The collected data was entered into a matrix created with SPSS 22.0 software. The information entered is the answers to the closed questions. This software was logically used to perform quantitative (descriptive, inferential) analysis of the data. The open questions were used for the qualitative analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic characteristics of the students surveyed**

According to the results of this study, the majority (57.5%) of the students interviewed are male. However, there is a significant proportion (42.5%) of girls. In addition, the vast majority (89.7%) of students surveyed are made up of non-repeaters. In other words, only 10.2% of the pupils surveyed are repeaters. The histogram below gives the form of the age distribution of the students who participated in this study. It shows that the average age is 16.81 years with a standard deviation of 1.791. This gives a coefficient of variation, the value of which is 10.65%, indicating that the series is homogeneous around the average.



## Age de l'enquete

**Figure 1:** Distribution of respondents by age

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

The mean ( $= 16.81$ ), the median ( $Me = 17$ ) and the mode ( $Mo = 17$ ) of this distribution have substantially the same value. Therefore, it can be said that the distribution is symmetrical and follows a Gauss-Laplace curve.

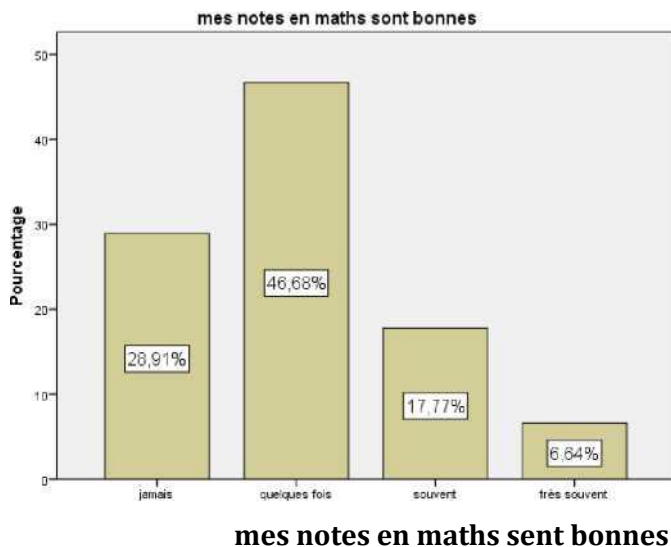
Regarding the level of study, we note that the majority of the pupils questioned (58.29%) are in the final year class of secondary schools. And the remaining 41.71% is distributed as follows: 16.34% in Second year classes and 13.66% in First year classes of secondary schools, 9.76% in final year classes and only 1.95% in second year classes of Junior high Schools.

## Math performance

### Performance level in mathematics

Le Robert (2003: 1902) defines performance as "the quantified result obtained in a competition". As for Legendre (1993: 977), he defines performance as "the result obtained by a person, during the accomplishment of a specific task whose execution obeys pre-established rules".

In general, performance in a discipline is materialized by the students' marks in this subject even if these are not sufficiently relevant to characterize their achievements. Grades in mathematics are therefore performance indicators in this discipline. As KALAMO A. (2010/2011) puts it, "performance necessarily refers to the production of a response during an event. If the scores are high, we will speak of high performance. Otherwise they will be low."



**Figure 2:** Distribution of students according to the frequency with which they have good marks in mathematics.

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

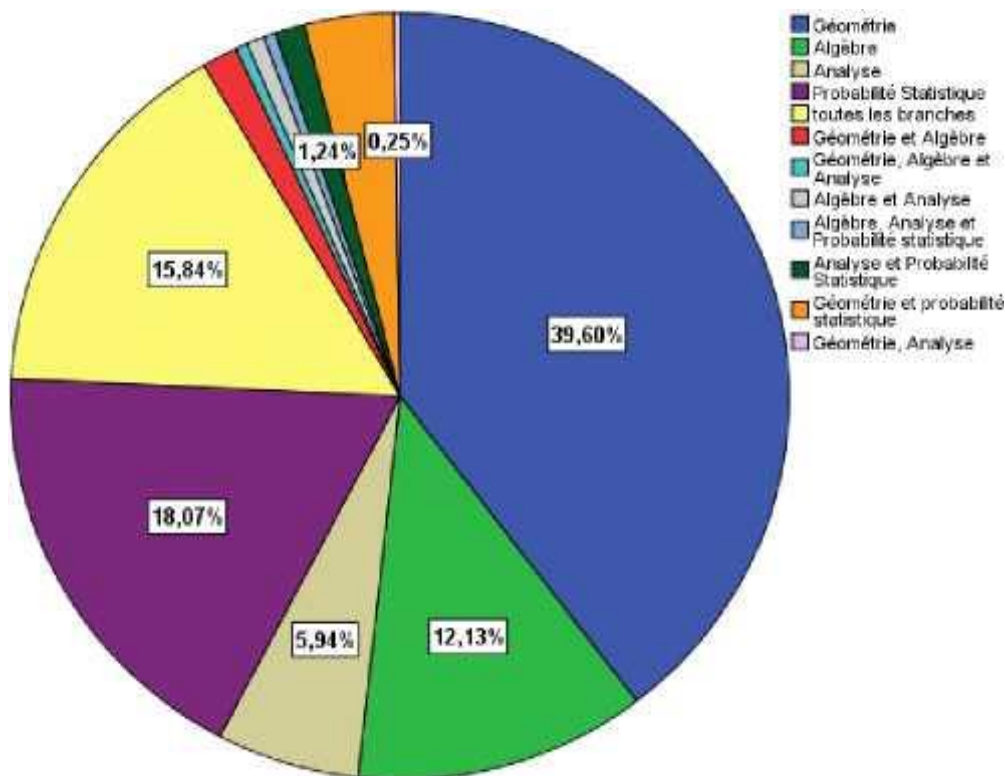
The graph above indicates that the vast majority of students surveyed generally do not perform well in mathematics. In fact, almost half (46.68%) of them report having good marks only a few times and a considerable proportion (28.91%) say they never have good marks. Unlike them alone (17.77%) say they often have good marks and a small minority (6.64%) state that they very often have good marks. These results generally indicate the poor performance of students in this discipline.

### **Metacognitive strategies implemented to solve a given mathematical problem**

The results of this study indicate that, in general, pupils encounter difficulties in mathematics from the class of Seconde (45.2%). However, other students say that they have difficulty in mathematics from the fourth (18.1%), sixth (9.3%) or even from primary school (4.8%) classes.

The figure below shows the different branches of mathematics (Geometry, Algebra, Analysis and Statistical Probability) in which students have the most difficulty.

## Dans quelle(s) branche(s) des mathématiques avez-vous le plus de problèmes ?

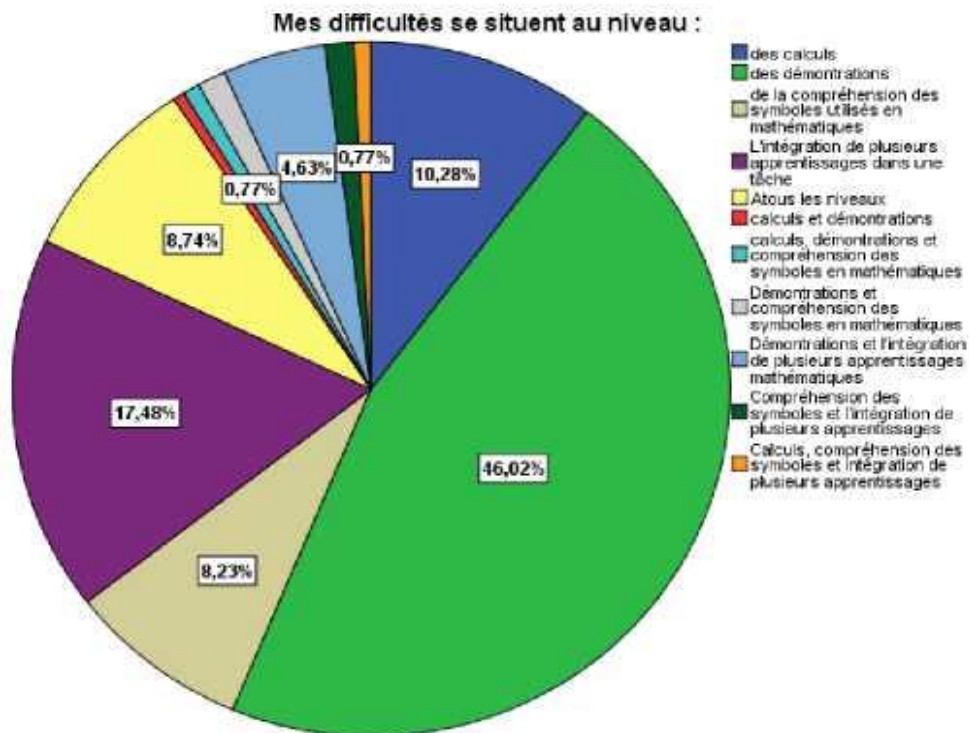


**Figure 3:** Distribution of respondents according to the branch (es) of mathematics in which they encounter the most problems.

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

According to the statistics presented in this figure, a high proportion (39.60%) of the students questioned say they have more difficulties in Geometry, followed by those who say they have difficulties in Statistical Probability (18.07%) and Algebra (12, 13%). However, a non-negligible proportion (15.84%) of respondents indicate having difficulties in all branches of mathematics. It emerges from this analysis that Geometry constitutes the branch in which students encounter the most difficulties.

The difficulties encountered by pupils in the different branches of mathematics lie on several levels. It involves: calculations, demonstrations, understanding the symbols used in mathematics and integrating several learnings into a task.



**Figure 4:** Distribution of respondents according to the type of difficulties they encounter in mathematics

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

The statistical data presented in this figure indicate that a fairly high proportion (46.02%) of students say they have difficulties with demonstrations. Similarly, another sizeable proportion (17.48%) of students say they encounter difficulties in integrating several learnings into a task. However, a small proportion (8.23%) of respondents say they have difficulties relating to the understanding of symbols used in mathematics. Next to these pupils who have specific difficulties, 8.74% of pupils declare having difficulties at all levels.

It should be noted from this analysis that demonstrations in mathematics are a real concern for students, regardless of their level of study and their age.

### **Metacognitive strategies implemented by the student to solve a given mathematical problem**

Most metacognitive knowledge concerns interactions between different variables, for example, the person, the task and the strategies (Flavell, 1979; Pinard, Lefebvre-Pinard and Bibeau, 1989). Several metacognitive strategies are adopted differently by students to solve a given problem in mathematics. These are among others: the

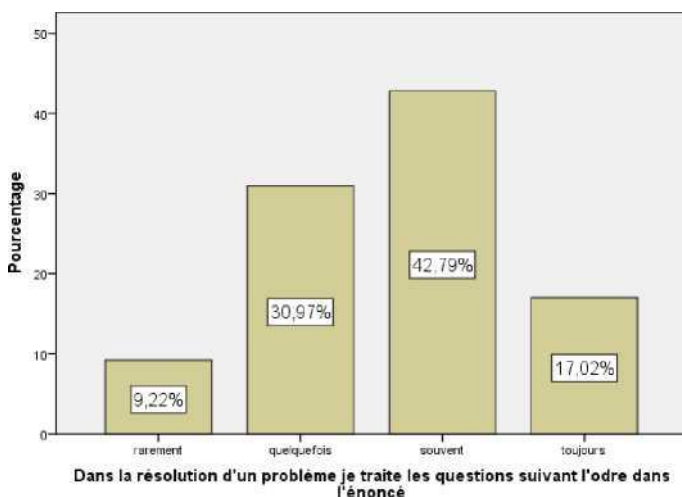


resolution of the next question before the one preceding it, the comparison of the question to be treated with a similar question already encountered, the contextualization of the question asked and the cognitive summary of what is done and what remains to be done.

### **Resolution of questions in the order of arrangement in the problem statement**

Students adopt various metacognitive strategies in solving a problem. Along the way, some students allow themselves to be guided by the order induced by the utterance, while others adopt strategies which consist in resolving the questions according to their levels of apprehension of them.

### **Dans la resolution d'un probleme je traite les questions suivant l'ordre dans l'annonce**



**Figure 5:** Graph of distribution of respondents according to the frequency with which they follow the order of the questions in the statement when solving the problem.

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

Figure 5 above indicates that the majority (cumulative percentage: 59.51%) of students say they answer the questions often or always in the order in the statement and a considerable proportion (30.9%) say they address the questions sometimes following the order induced by the statement. In contrast to these, it is noted that only a minority (9.22%) claim to rarely do so. These data show that very few students adopt path strategies based on the difficulties they encounter when solving problems.

### **Resolving the next question before the one before it**

One of the metacognitive strategies developed by the students interviewed during this study, is the resolution of the next question before the one before it when difficulties arise in understanding it.

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents according to the frequency with which they solve the next question before returning to the previous question.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very often	149	35,2	35,2	35,2
Regularly	137	32,4	32,4	67,6
Sometimes	91	21,5	21,5	89,1
Very rarely	46	10,9	10,9	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

According to the results presented in this table, 89.1% of students state that very often (35.2%), regularly (32.4%) or sometimes (21.5%), when solving certain math problems, when the order of the questions hinders them in their progress, they sometimes resolve the following question (s) before returning to the previous question.

However, a small proportion (10.9%) declare that they rarely do so. In the same vein, a very high proportion of the students surveyed (81.9%) specifies that very often (28.2%), regularly (27.4%) or sometimes (26.3%), when they do not immediately understand what is asked in a problem, they prefer to move on to the next question, while hoping that the problem will resolve itself. This approach is very rarely adopted by a small proportion (18.1%) of students. The above results indicate that at least 10% of students follow the order in which the questions are asked in the statement to progress the resolution of the problem. And this despite the difficulties encountered. These are students who are very dependent on the structuring (the order) of the questions. We also note that the fact of redefining the order of resolution of the questions asked does not inexorably lead the student to a failure in solving the problem. In fact, 75% of respondents say that the failure to solve a problem is not due to the fact that they do not appear in the order in which certain questions are asked in the statement. It should be noted, however, that a significant proportion (25%) of respondents said the opposite.

However, the bivariate analysis of the variables linked to the items "in solving a problem I treat the questions according to the order in the statement" and I follow a sequence of instructions "shows that:

Among students who rarely follow the order of questions, 12.8% rarely adopt, 20.5% sometimes adopt, 43.6% often adopt and 23.1% always follow a procedure according to the instructions.

Among the students who state that they sometimes follow the order of questions, 35.1% rarely adopt, 31.3% sometimes adopt, 23.7% often adopt and 9.9% always follow a procedure according to the instructions

Among the students who state that they often follow the order of the questions, 47.5% rarely adopt, 37% sometimes adopt, 6.6% often adopt and 8.8% always follow a procedure according to the instructions

Among students who say they always follow the order of the questions, 51.4% rarely adopt, 33.3% sometimes adopt, 11.1% often adopt and 4.2% always follow a procedure as instructed.

Thus, students who very often or always follow the order of the questions in the statement adopt a path that varies rarely or sometimes, depending on the instructions of the statement. Conversely, those who rarely or sometimes follow the order of the questions often or always adapt their progress to the instructions given in the statement.

The chi-square test indicates that at the threshold  $\alpha = 5\%$ , the order of succession of the questions in the statement of a mathematical problem has an impact on the student's cognitive path logic in solving this problem. . Indeed, the p-value = 0.000 (the probability of making an error by rejecting the null hypothesis) being less than 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis of independence between the cognitive progress of the student and the order questions in the statement.

This situation highlights the influence of the teacher's logic in the structuring "previous question, next question" of the statement of a mathematical problem on that of the student in the resolution of this problem

Comparison of the question to be addressed with a similar question already encountered

Another strategy adopted is the comparison of the question to be treated with a similar question already encountered.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents according to whether they are trying to see how they can use the result obtained with the previous question to answer the next question.

	Frequency	Percentage	valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Very often	127	30,0	30,2	30,2
Regularly	116	27,4	27,6	57,7
Sometimes	124	29,3	29,5	87,2
Very rarely	54	12,8	12,8	100,0
Total	421	99,5	100,0	
No answer	2	0,5		
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100,0</b>		

**Source :** Surveys, 2019

According to the results presented in this table, a very high proportion of students (87.2%) maintain that very often (30.2%), regularly (27.6%) or even sometimes (29.5%), in a same exercise, when they do not immediately understand a question, they try to see if there are elements of answer in the previous question that could help them resolve the following question. Similarly, another way of proceeding is to ask whether the question to be dealt with does not refer to another already resolved question which is similar to it. This approach is very often (27.1%), regularly (24.2%) or even sometimes (30.2%) adopted. Put together, they make up a very large majority (81.5%) of the students interviewed for this study.

### Contextualization of the question asked

The contextualization of the question asked is also one of the metacognitive strategies used by students to solve a given problem in mathematics. The table below provides more details.

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents according to whether they are trying to understand a question using the situation in which it is asked.

	Frequency	Percentage	valid Percentage	cumulative Pourcentage
Very often	140	33,1	33,3	33,3
Regularly	149	35,2	35,4	68,6
Sometime	103	24,3	24,5	93,1
Very rarely	29	6,9	6,9	100,0
Total	421	99,5	100,0	
No answers	2	,5		
Total	423	100,0		

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

According to the statistics presented in Table 3, almost all (93.1%) of students maintain that very often (33.3%), regularly (35.4%) or even sometimes (24.5%), when they do not immediately understand a question, they try to understand it using the situation in which it is asked. Unlike these, this strategy is very rarely adopted by a very small proportion (6.9%) of the students surveyed.

### Cognitive summary of what is done and what remains to be done.

**Table 4:** Distribution of respondents according to whether they summarize what they have already done and what remains to be done.

	Frequence	Pourcentage	Pourcentage valide	Pourcentage cumule
Very often	91	21,5	21,7	21,7
Regularly	138	32,6	32,9	54,5
Sometimes	112	26,5	26,7	81,2
Very rarely	79	18,7	18,8	100,0
Total				

	420	99,3	100,0	
No answers	3	0,7		
Total	423	100,0		

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

According to the statistics in this table, 81.2% of respondents say that very often (21.7%), regularly (32.9%) or even sometimes (26.7%), while they are solving a problem, they sum up in their "heads" what they have already done and what they still have to do. Even if in most cases students develop problem-solving strategies, it should be noted that when they do not understand the first question asked in a mathematical problem, they are often disturbed in their progress. Even when the questions that follow seem affordable to them.

**Table 5:** Distribution of respondents according to whether they are disturbed in their progress when they do not understand the first question.

	Frequence	Pourcentage	Pourcentage valide	Pourcentage cumule
Very often	115	27,2	27,2	27,2
Regularly	67	15,8	15,8	43,0
Sometimes	174	41,1	41,1	84,2
Very rarely	67	15,8	15,8	100,0
Total	423	100,0	100,0	

**Source:** Surveys, 2019

According to the statistics presented in this table, 84.2% of respondents say that very often (27.2%), regularly (15.8%) or even sometimes (41.1%), when they come up against the first question of a math exercise, they find it difficult to continue solving the exercise although the following questions are within their reach.

### **Link between poor performance in mathematics and the discrepancy between the logic of resolution induced by the statement and that of the student facing the problem posed**

The bivariate analysis of the variables linked to the items "in solving a problem I deal with the questions according to the order in the statement" and "I have good marks in mathematics" shows that: • Among the students who state that they rarely deal with questions in the order in which they are stated, 30.8% state that they never have good marks, 20.5% have sometimes, 23.1% have often and 10.3% very often good grades.

Among the students who state that they sometimes address the questions in the order in which they are stated, 28.2% state that they never have good marks, 54.2% have sometimes, 14.5% have often and 3.1% have very often good grades.

Among the students who state that they often deal with the questions in the order in which they are stated, 28.9% state that they never have good marks, 45% have sometimes, 16.1% have often and 10% have very often, good marks.

Among the students who say they always deal with the questions in the correct order in the statement, 29.2% declare never having good marks, 43.1% have sometimes, 25% have often and 6.6% have very often, good grades. Thus, there are disparities in student performance in solving the questions of a problem, regardless of how often they follow the order of the questions in the statement. The Chi-square test also confirms that at the threshold of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , there is no relationship between students' performance in mathematics and the frequency with which they follow the order of the questions in the statement. Indeed, the value  $p = 0.099$  (probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) is greater than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . So we cannot reject  $H_0$ .

### **Procedure for the teacher to elaborate the statement of a mathematical problem**

The results obtained from the teachers interviewed reveal that the procedure for developing the statement of a mathematical problem differs from one teacher to another. While some teachers take a relatively clear approach, others do not take any particular procedure into account. This is the case, for example, of Mr. Ka., A math teacher, who, in terms of procedure, only bases himself on things already seen by the learners to develop the statement of a problem in mathematics. This one affirms: *"there is no particular rule applied in the structuring of the statement of the problem. It is a direct application of knowledge and skills"*. Abounding in the same direction, Mr. Y. maintains that: *"To build a mathematical problem, I look at the course I did, I see the skills to develop, and then I give a subject that embraces all of these data "*.

In contrast, other teachers develop problem statements in mathematics, taking into account certain criteria. This involves developing the mathematical problem around the skills sought, asking "small" questions, that is to say easy to solve, to put the student at ease, guiding him towards the essential skills that we want to evaluate and initiate an activity in order to get students to bring out the problem.

Another procedure is to construct the problem in mathematics, going from the most obvious skills to achieve to the most complex ones.

In general, it appears that most of the teachers interviewed avoided the questions being linked so as not to have the student blocked in solving the problem. And even when the questions need to be linked, teachers ensure that the following questions use the answers from the previous questions, which are subtly presented as data to be used. This assertion is supported by the words of Mr. K., math teacher, who says: *"The student is not necessarily asked to follow the order in which the math problem is posed to arrive at the expected answer. He can even see his own approach, while taking into account the requirements of the program in force"*. When analyzing these remarks, it should be noted that teachers admit that students sometimes follow their own path

to achieve the expected result, provided that this path is consistent with the program in force.

Another strategy used by teachers is to deal with the subject at home or even seek the advice of their colleagues in order to correct any inconsistencies in the writing of the statement, before submitting it to the students for reflection.

These teachers point out that the area where students have the most problems is geometry. Particularly for the students of final grade, the problem is in arithmetic. Because they have real difficulties in correctly representing the problem posed in order to adopt a good resolution strategy.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results of this study corroborate those of numerous studies by researchers who have demonstrated that problem solving is an activity which requires the subject to construct an effective path in order to arrive at the adequate solution. As Poirier Proulx (1999) points out, problem solving is a "thinking strategy which consists in seeking a path to reduce the gap between a present unsatisfactory situation and a desired satisfactory situation or a goal to be achieved". The study highlights concordances but also divergences in the student's path when solving a given problem, with the teacher's logic in the arrangement of the questions asked.

Problem solving is an essential process in learning mathematics. It allows students to learn how to use and explain their own strategies and to recognize that several very different strategies lead to the same solution (Education in Ontario Paper 2, 2006); Thus, to solve a given mathematical problem, students have recourse to various metacognitive strategies, more particularly self-regulation: the resolution of the next question before the one that precedes it when it appears more difficult, the comparison of the question to be treated with a similar question already encountered, the contextualization of the question asked and the cognitive summary of what is done and what remains to be done. These results corroborate those of Flavell, 1979; Pinard, Lefebvre-Pinard and Bibeau, 1989.

The results also indicate that the vast majority of students surveyed generally do not perform well in mathematics. In addition, the difficulties encountered by pupils in mathematics generally arise from the second grade. It should be noted from this study that the calculations, the demonstrations, the understanding of the symbols used in mathematics and the integration of several learnings in a task represent difficulties for the pupils in the various branches of mathematics. However, according to the teachers surveyed, geometry is the area in which students have the most difficulty solving problems.

However, it should be noted that demonstrations in mathematics are a real concern for students, regardless of their level of study and their age. Regarding the procedure for developing the statement of a mathematical problem in general, it emerges that



most of the teachers interviewed avoided that the questions were linked so as not to have the student be blocked in his progress by one or more some questions he does not understand. And even when the questions need to be linked, teachers ensure that the following questions use the answers from the previous questions, which are subtly presented as data to be used. These results corroborate those of De Vanssay S. and Blavous S. (2010), who emphasize the structuring of the content of a mathematical statement, aimed at guiding the student in his resolution. This situation highlights the impact of the teacher's logic in structuring "previous question, next question" in the statement of a mathematical problem, on that of the student in solving this problem.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that the performance of students in mathematics is not dependent on the frequency with which they follow the order of the questions in the statement. Ultimately, it should be noted that the results of this study contain some weaknesses, due to the data collection instruments, the survey sample, the conditions under which these information collections were carried out, the processing of the data collected. And the interpretation of the results obtained. We must therefore be careful not to generalize them haphazardly. However, they should not be dismissed out of hand.

## Bibliography

- [1] Barbier, J.-M. (1984). *Training evaluation*. Paris: PUF.
- [2] Brassard, N. (2012). *Evaluation and feedback: how to benefit from it? the painting* volume 1 number 4 - 2012  
<https://www.seigner.ulaval.ca/ressources-pedagogiques/la-strategie-d-evaluation>
- [3] Brun, J. (1990). "Solving arithmetic problems: assessment and perspectives". *Maths- ecoles*, n° 141
- [4] Couchoux, C. (2005). *Schematic aids problem solving*. IUFM de BOURGOGNE, Final thesis.
- [5] De Blavous, S. (2010). *An example of teaching practice for solving additive problems in CE1; Why be complex when you could be simple?* Dissertation of Master 1 sciences of education University Paris Descartes
- [6] Education in Ontario (2006). *Guide to Effective Mathematics, Kindergarten to Grade 6 Leaflet 2*, Ontario
- [7] Fagnant, A., Richard, E., Mottier-Lopez, L. & Hindryckx, M-N (2017). *Assessment as a learning object and as a professional development tool in the context of teacher training*. *Evaluate- International Journal of Research in Education and Training*, Lodel. <hal-01715665>.
- [8] Flavell, J. H. (1979). *Metacognition and cognitive monitoring*. American

Psychologist, 34 (10).

- [9] Kalamo, A. (2010/2011). *Determinants of school performance at the end of elementary education in Senegal: Case of the Departmental Inspectorate of Education in Velingara, in the Kolda region*. Master, thesis in education and training CHEIKH ANTA DIOP DAKAR UNIVERSITY (UCAD).
- [10] THE DICO OF DEFINITIONS (2011). *Problem definition*. URL:
- [11] <https://lesdefinitions.fr/probleme>
- [12] Le Robert, P. (2003). *Alphabetical and analogical dictionary of the French language*. Paris: Petit Robert.
- [13] Legendre, R. (1993). *Current dictionary of education*. Paris: Eska.
- [14] Munck, F. Pilard, P. & Terrien, D. (2014). *Evaluate to make students succeed. the Nantes Academy reprography service of the Nantes rectorate (Loire-Atlantique)*
- [15] Musial, M., Pradere, F. & Tricot, A. (2012). *How to design an education?* Brussels: De Boeck.
- [16] Pinard, A., Lefebvre-Pinard, M. and Bibeau, M. (1989). *Metacognitive knowledge on understanding: comparison between illiterate adults and literate adults*. *Revue quebecoise de psychologie*, 10 (3), 78-91
- [17] Poirier Proulx, L. (1999). *Problem solving in teaching. Reference framework and training tools*. Paris: De Boeck and Larcier.
- [18] Vergnaud, G. (1986). *Psychology of cognitive development and didactics of Mathematics*. *Revue Grand N* ° 38; URL: <http://jean-luc.bregeon.pagesperso-orange.fr/Page%201-7.htm>

# The Support of Juvenile Offender Learners in Correctional Centre Schools: A Spiritual Wellness Perspective

Theresa Lydia Badiktsie Manzini

University of South Africa

## Abstract

This qualitative, phenomenological study, explore the support of juvenile offender learners in correctional schools from a spiritual wellness perspective. The study aimed to explore ways in which supporting juvenile offender learners' spiritual wellness can enhance teaching and learning, rehabilitate, and reduce recidivism. Twenty-one juvenile offender learners and seven teachers were selected from seven correctional schools in South Africa on the bases of availability and willingness. The study intergraded Ubuntu and spiritual wellness frameworks as a lens to understand the current study. Findings revealed that teachers support juvenile learners' spiritual wellness and it enhances teaching and learning, thus, resulted in a positive behavioural change of the juvenile offender learners. The study recommends that teachers and security official be trained on how to identify the spiritual challenges of juvenile learners and address them in order to improve their learning and rehabilitate. The DCS can do this through collaboration with various stakeholders who have knowledge and expertise in the spiritual wellness scope.

**Keywords:** spiritual wellness, support, moral values, recidivism, rehabilitation, juvenile offender learner, correctional schools

## Introduction

In South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services offers education to juvenile offender learners with the aim of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is meant to reform and remoulds an individual positively, to conform to societal needs, avoid criminality and to lower recidivism (Department of Correctional Services, 2008). To achieve the aims, the correctional centres have schools that offer formal and non-formal learning programmes to educate juvenile offender learners. The formal programmes are Adult Education And Training (AET) Level 1-4 where they are trained basic literacy and numeracy; FET (Grade 10- 12) where they are further enhanced in numeracy and literacy and broaden the curriculum. Thirdly is the Vocational Education. In these programmes, they are hands-on (Department of Correctional Services, 2018).

Additionally, the non-formal learning programmes include offence-focused programmes that help the juvenile learner to reduce recidivism and address issues that compelled them to commit the crime. The non-formal programmes include thinking skills, life skills, anger management, religious studies and substance abuse treatment (Hawley, Murphy & Souto- Otero, 2013). At the same time, Grayling (2012) recommends comprehensive broad-ranging concept of education such as physical education, social education, creative and cultural activities and religious programmes as essential in the correctional schools.

As declared in the Constitution of South Africa (1996), all learners are entitled to high education, relevant curriculum, appropriate assessment, equivalent and valued opportunities. Thus, correctional schools need programmes that support and strengthen rehabilitation as opposed to punishment (Schirmer, 2008). For this reason, juvenile offender learners' needs should be at the centre of teaching and learning in the correctional schools. Therefore, the study attempts to understand the role of supporting spiritual wellness in enhancing teaching and learning in the correctional schools.

According to Rasmussen, Northrup and Colson (2017), teaching and learning is a process where the teacher assesses learning needs, establishes specific learning objectives, develops teaching and learning strategies, implements plan of work and evaluates the outcomes of the instruction. Hence, the correctional schools should promote an environment that accommodates juvenile offender learners' diversity, including varied learning needs, to maximise each offender's potential, wellness and to rehabilitate. While, Magano & Ramnarain (2015) urge that teaching and learning that enhances spiritual wellness link to the achievement of learning, rehabilitation, self-discipline and reduce recidivism. For that reason, promoting spiritual wellness can enhance rehabilitation, change the lives of juvenile offenders, and bring sustainability of teaching and learning in the correctional schools (Magano & Ramnarain, 2015).

### **Support of Spiritual wellness in the correctional schools**

The support of spiritual wellness is very much crucial for juvenile offender learners in correctional schools. Studies have shown that deficits in spiritual support have many problems amongst juvenile learners and the teachers in the correctional schools. However, spiritual practices help juvenile learners to intergrades the body, mind and spirit and enhance intellectual, emotional, social and physical benefits (Myers, Sweeney & Witmer, 1998). Witmer, Sweeney and Myers (1998), from multiple disciplines, suggest wellness as a way of life oriented towards optimal health and well-being, of the body, mind, and spirit, in which the juvenile offender learners lives more fully within the community in the correctional school.

The study by McConnell, Pargament, Ellison and Flannelly (2006) highlight that lack of spiritual support causes learning barriers such as resistance to change, feelings of

hopelessness, self-centredness, ill-discipline, spiritual conflicts with others and self of which it can exacerbate anxiety, anger and depression of the juvenile offender learners. Therefore, it is essential to provide spiritual support to juvenile offender learners in the correctional schools to assist them to find purpose and meaning of their life so that they can learn and turn away from committing the crime.

Hettler (2000) elucidated that the fundamental goal of spiritual wellness is to engage juvenile offender learners in learning about the process of seeking meaning, realistic beliefs and purpose in existence (Hettler, 2000). Spiritual wellness assists them to adopt positive and appropriate morals, norms and values, and discover alternative social interactive. That includes learning to appreciate the depth and expanse of life and the universe (Frantz, 2017). Mucina (2011) also, coincides that spiritual wellness is a guiding voice that protects and guides the juvenile learner into moral ways of living, dignity, respect and pride shared with other people.

Besides, spiritual wellness has been recognised to be the foundation of equanimity in the classroom. Astin (1993) argues that equanimity is a sense of calm, peacefulness, centeredness and most importantly self-transcendence that provide juvenile learners with the ability to rise above or move beyond the limits of personal experience in the correctional schools. Thus, this study is to understand how the support of spiritual wellness could play a role in bringing about successful teaching and learning in the correctional schools.

### **Spiritual wellness enhances teaching and learning.**

Support for spiritual wellness has been recognised to have a significant impact on the academic achievement of juvenile learners. Since spiritual wellness is linked to the achievement of learning, rehabilitation, self-discipline, change the lives of juvenile offenders, and bring sustainability of teaching and learning in the correctional schools (Magano & Ramnarain, 2015). Juvenile learners who have sufficient support for spiritual wellness adopt positive and appropriate morals, which promote and maintain discipline in the classroom.

Moreover, the spiritual support received by juvenile learners could help to promote norms and values, and discover alternative social interactive, thus, helping them to interact positively, assist each other in study groups and perform well in academic life (Frantz, 2017). The idea is supported by Ballentine (2010), who asserts that learners with higher levels of spirituality have improved social relationships and coping skills in the correctional schools.

Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (1998) also concur that spiritual wellness enhances harmony with the self and others, gives unity, that could help them excel in their studies and cope with any psychological disturbances that might be brought by being incarcerated in the correctional centre. Furthermore, it teaches juvenile offender learners to respect, live in harmony, and successfully reintegrate in the community after their release. Therefore, teachers should support spiritual wellness of juvenile

learners by educating, inculcating principles, morals, harmony, norms and values that are built upon kindness, reaching out, caring for others and ensure there is cooperation among them.

Likewise, it has been recognised that support of spiritual wellness assists juvenile learners to increase the quality of life by finding purpose, meaning, and goals in life, which is essential in successful teaching and learning in the correctional schools (Gold, 2010). It improves compassion and hope in life. It includes learning to appreciate the depth and expanse of life and the universe (Gold, 2010). On the contrary, those who are not happy with their spirituality have difficulties concentrating in the classroom and therefore, could have a decrease in academic success (Ballentine, 2010).

Moreover, in Dzulkifli and Yasin (2010) study reports that spiritual support enhances juvenile learners with high equanimity, thus, tend to get better grades in school, and are more satisfied with their overall school experience.

Furthermore, Gold (2010) advocates that support of spiritual wellness enhances understanding of peace and serenity. Thus, it assists juvenile offender learners to understand the sense of calmness, equanimity, and peacefulness and avoid conflicts with others in the classroom. It facilitates the development of positive self-conceptions and social skills, responsibility and competence and impulse control, less misconduct and less delinquency amongst learners, which would produce significant effects on academic achievement. Since supporting spiritual wellness is very much crucial to juvenile offender learners in the correctional schools, this study will also help teachers; correctional management, security personnel and families to understand their roles in helping learners to rehabilitate, improve their wellness and succeed in teaching and learning.

### **Theoretical framework**

The study is theoretically underpinned in an African lens of Ubuntu in looking at how spiritual wellness is enhanced. Mbiti (1992), Gyekye (1997), Ramose (1999) and Shutte (2001) pointed out that in African philosophy, an individual extends from family and the community they live in and a collective way of life, impacts on every aspect of people's well-being. Ubuntu as a lens posits that an individual, the family are interdependent to a community. Ubuntu places 'being human through other people'. It emphasises the principle of collaboration, solidarity and teamwork to support juvenile offender learners' wellness, with different stakeholders' such as parents, correctional centre teachers, social workers, psychologist, pastors, NGO and CBO (Gyekye, 1997). Hence, Ubuntu is applicable in supporting juvenile learners' spiritual wellness in regards to teaching and learning in the correctional centre.

I also used a wellness model by (Hettler, 2000) in looking at how is the support of juvenile offender learners' spiritual wellness in regards to the success of their teaching and learning. The wellness model has six dimensions that are intertwining,

namely, social academic, emotional, spiritual, physical and career wellness. These six dimensions of wellness influence each other. Witmer, Sweeney and Myers (1998), from multiple disciplines, suggest wellness as a way of life oriented towards optimal health and well-being, of the body, mind, and spirit, in which the juvenile offender learners lives more fully within the community. Spiritual wellness implies an understanding of own values, morals and beliefs leading to a sense of meaning or purpose and a relationship to the community as an integral part caring for another and that binds all community members together (Mulaudzi, 2014). The lens was applicable in assisting the researcher to explore how spiritual wellness can bring change and success in juvenile learners' learning and teaching while they rehabilitate and avoid crime.

### **Research Questions**

How can the support of juvenile offender learners' spiritual wellness bring change and success in the learning and teaching in the correctional schools?

What roles teachers play to support juvenile learners' wellness?

What are the support structures perceived to be supportive and effective?

### **Methodology**

The study is embedded within an interpretive paradigm to assist the researcher to get a deeper understanding and meanings of the social world that participants live in (Henning, van Ransburg & Smit, 2004). The researcher views the participants in their natural social setting because they have a better way to define and interpret their situation (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the researcher viewed the juvenile learners in correctional schools, as it is suitable for the study to explain their behaviour and lived experiences. The qualitative design was used to collect data because this method is flexible and allows the researcher to be directly involved in the research process by observing and recording the event in their natural settings. The qualitative design allows the teachers and juvenile offender learners to speak for themselves and maximise what could be learnt.

Moreover, it assisted the researcher to obtain in-depth description and understanding of actions and events of data, rather than to assume or to control the data (Merriam, 2002). The case study was used as an approach to explore the support of juvenile offender learners. The case study involves a bounded system or case, which can be a person, a group of people or an event to be investigated in-depth using several data-collecting sources in the setting (Henning et al., 2004). In this study, the case is the seven correctional schools with juvenile offender learners attending classes in AET level 4 on a full-time basis.

### **Instruments**

In this study, the researcher designed two instruments, which enabled one to gather data on the support of juvenile offender learners in correctional schools. The semi-



structured interviews were open-ended questions to be used for teachers. The questions covered in the semi-structured interview were aspects such as experiences of teaching particular subjects, their roles of supporting the wellness of juvenile learners, challenges that they experience in a correctional school, what support structures for teaching and learning are available for supporting wellness, and how juvenile learners perceive the support. The interviews took place after lessons during their spare time for approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

For juvenile offender learners, the researcher provided open-ended questionnaires so that indepth data would emerge. The questions were different from the teachers. Juvenile learners' instrument focused on how they perceive the support of wellness in the correctional school, how it enables them to rehabilitate, enhances purpose and meaning in their life, and what they enjoyed the most in support of their wellness. The juvenile learners completed the questionnaires during one period approximately 45 minutes and returned the completed instruments.

### **Sampling**

According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), purposive sampling assumes that the researcher is well informed about the kind of participants suitable for the study. In this study, Purposive sampling was used to select 12 teachers and 21 juvenile offender learners who were attending classes in AET level 4 on a full-time basis from the seven correctional schools in the four provinces in South Africa. Ethical measures were considered, and ethical certificate to carry out the research was issued from the University of South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services and the research site which are the seven schools from Kwazulu-Natal, two in Western Cape, and two at Gauteng Province and one from Orange Free State Province. All participants were informed about privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and their rights to withdraw from participating in the research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Creswell, 2007).

### **Data analysis**

Analysis of the data collected from the teachers' interviews and juvenile learners' questionnaires was organised into codes, compile similar information into cluster groups, and categorise similarities and differences into emerging themes (Henning et al., 2004).

The themes emerged from the data collection of teachers' interviews, and open-ended questionnaires of juvenile learners were written separately and used as the basis for discussing the findings. The themes emerged were written as sub-headings in discussing the findings.

Themes From juvenile learners:

spiritual wellness enhances teaching and learning and behavioural change

Support for spiritual wellness induces hope and aspirations.

Themes from the teachers are as follows:

Spiritual wellness as a Rehabilitation tool

Roles of teachers in supporting juvenile learners

Challenges that threaten spiritual wellness

Availability of support structures and Collaboration with stakeholders

### **Findings of the study**

#### ***Spiritual wellness enhances teaching, learning, and behavioural change***

Most participants mentioned that teaching and learning received at the correctional schools have a significant impact on their behavioural change. They expressed satisfaction in changing their behaviour because of the education and the spiritual support received. From the finding juvenile learners convey that, a personal guideline has been imparted to them, helps and teaches them to believe there is purpose in all situations in life, thus prepares them for reentry into their communities.

*"I am Christian I value being human and learnt to ask for forgiveness from those I wronged in the community. I have learnt that I have a better purpose in life than committing a crime."*

*“.spiritual teachings up-lift and help me cope in here, I sing songs and pray every day”.*

*“Singing heals me sometimes we sing with my cellmates in the section, I always feel better.”*

The above responses emphasises the fact that education that supports spiritual wellness in the correctional centre schools benefits positive moral values, forgiveness and discipline so that they can change and avoid committing crimes.

#### ***Support for spiritual wellness induces hope and aspirations***

Results revealed that spiritual support inculcates hope and aspirations in juvenile learners' life. They uttered that the inspirational messages taught to them by pastors who often visit in the correctional school inspire them to value life and have a sense of meaning to life. They also mentioned that the support of spiritual wellness brings forth a sense of purpose in their life. They stated purpose such as to advice and guide youth not to commit a crime.

*“When I sing, I feel better and get hope to change from the bad things I did in the past.”*

*“The pastor inspires me to be a good person in my community. I want to be a pastor also and show young people not to do bad things to other people.”*

*“ I sing songs to relief stress, I pray and meditate yes, and I feel proud about who I am now.”*

*“I sing to get comfort and pray for success in my life.”*

*"I pray every morning and evening to know who I am and what I need in life and takes talent to the next level of Redemption. In here, I learn to live like other people outside going to church every day and pray all the time. I am praying to God to give me a long life like Nelson Mandela."*

Based on the above findings, they are taught and given time to pray and meditate. They value being human and still feel they have a second chance in life, as they are inspired to change. They learnt to have compassion for others, relieves stress, anxiety, and depression; thus, chances of rehabilitating are high.

### **Spiritual wellness as a rehabilitation tool**

From the seven correctional schools, findings indicated that teachers perceive spiritual support as a rehabilitation tool that plays a vital element in teaching and learning. It brings about the personal growth through knowledge, development and behavioural change of juvenile learners. Teachers indicated that juvenile learners who are not happy with their spirituality have difficulties concentrating in the classroom, ultimately, a decline in academic success. They indicated that they support various spiritual programmes that juvenile offender learners belong to since it helps them to have self-discipline, positive outlook and cope more effectively in the correctional school. They expressed sufficient support on spiritual wellness promote positive morality, personal discovery, understanding and discontentment, which is an essential factor for rehabilitation and avoid recidivism.

*"Some are positive here for their deeds outside influence their behaviour."*

*"Yes they do belong to spiritual programmes, but some are not like normal society."*

*"Yes, spiritual support assist them to change positively; once they stop participating in spiritual activities, they join gang activities."*

*".supporting spiritual wellness of juvenile learners is crucial because it helps them to change and rehabilitate."*

*"We teach and support spiritual wellness in order to emphasise personal growth and development through imparting knowledge."*

*"Juvenile learners who engage in spiritual activities can understand and tolerate each other."*

*"...they have changed since they arrived here they are not wild anymore but calm".*

Findings discovered that teachers educate, encourage and support juvenile learners to work on their humanity personal character up until they realise the importance of harmony, morals, and right attitude.

It was evident from the teacher in Western Cape, who mentioned that,

*"...teach juvenile learners to value and respect their beliefs systems, values and to value being human and respect other people in life..."*

One teacher from KZN correctional school had this to say:

*"juvenile learners who attend or belong to any spiritual groups have changed since they arrived here they are not wild anymore but calm. Unlike those who do not, in most cases, are reluctant to change, show feelings of hopelessness, anger and selfishness".*

From school E in Gauteng Province also the teacher had this to say:

*"...positive effort in life is being encouraged and to search for harmony with others..."*

It was clear from the findings that spiritual support teaches juvenile learners positive behaviour such as humanity, morals, increased sense of empathy and increased insight and understanding of their purpose in life, which is required for rehabilitation.

On the other hand, teachers indicated that juvenile learners who are not happy with their spirituality have difficulties concentrating in the classroom, and therefore could have a decline in academic success. As a result, teachers need to teach and encourage juvenile learners to respect their beliefs, values and to value being human and respect for others in life. These values are crucial for learning to tolerate other people and understanding the moral values needed for rehabilitation.

### **Roles of teachers in supporting juvenile learners**

The study seems to suggest that most teachers in the correctional schools make an effort to support, encourage and motivate the juvenile learners to attend classes and get educated in order to change their lives and live positively in the community. Regardless of the harsh conditions they experience in the correctional schools, teachers encourage them to engage in different spiritual and religious programmes available in the correctional schools in order to learn and enhance their spiritual wellness and rehabilitate.

Participating teachers from KZN correctional schools had this to say:

*"I encourage juvenile learners to respect their beliefs, values and to value being human and respect other people in life. They have changed since they arrived here they are not wild anymore but calm".*

*"Juvenile learners who do not attend or belong to any spiritual groups in most cases are reluctant to change, show feelings of hopelessness and selfishness. As a teacher, I always encourage them to attend church, sing and I quote bible verses when I teach."*

For example, in some schools, teachers expressed that they participate in religious and spiritual activities such as worship, read the Bible, Quran, sing, and pray with the juvenile learners every morning before classes commence. The participants believe that when they support juvenile learners on spiritual wellness, it recuperates moral values and reaching a state of inner peace and a sense of wholeness, which is necessary for rehabilitation.

In Gauteng correctional schools, they expressed that:

*“It depends whether a teacher is a Christian or not, but I encourage participation”.  
“Encourage juvenile learners to belong to one of the religious groups.”*

However, participating teachers affirmed that their role is not to propel juvenile learners to join Christianity only, but they encourage them to belong to a spiritual group of their choice because it gives them hope in life and reduce anxiety, anger and depression than can cope in class.

It was evident from the teacher at school G in Free State Province, had this to say, *“encourage them to belong to religious and spiritual groups of their choice because it gives them hope in life, help them to cope in class and reduce anxiety, anger and depression.”*In Western Cape, the two schools, namely, A and B, there is evidence that teachers' role of supporting spiritual wellness of juvenile learners is crucial because it helps them to change and rehabilitate.

*“Motivate them to pray, meditate, sing songs and read uplifting spiritual verses from the Bible to give them hope in life. After they had spiritual activities, they demonstrate signs of peace and serenity.”*

*“Juvenile learners who do not attend or belong to any spiritual groups in most cases are reluctant to change, show feelings of hopelessness and selfishness. As a teacher, I always encourage them to attend church, sing and I quote bible verses when I teach.”*

From the above response of teachers, it shows that the role of teachers of motivating juvenile learners to participate in spiritual activities helps them to minimise conflicts with others and self; and lessen anxiety, anger and depression. Support assists juvenile learners to get answers to reality regarding life struggles and make meaning of their life experiences.

### **Available support and collaboration with stakeholders**

The findings of the study revealed that teachers collaborate with various stakeholders to support juvenile offender learners in correctional schools. The participating teachers allude that they have various denominations and religious groups such as Shembe, Roman Catholic Church, African Christian Zion, Muslims and other denominations as part of spiritual support structures. Findings further revealed that the correctional schools invite pastors and other spiritual care services, motivational speakers and different religious organisation to teach about moral lessons, encourage, motivate and to enhance the spiritual wellness of the juvenile learners in the correctional schools. Besides, other support structures such as Bible colleges, various NGO (Heartlines or Khulisa) guide and teach juvenile learners morals, values, prayers, meditation and other forms of the intermediary through correspondence until they receive certificates. Excerpt from the seven participated correctional school on spiritual wellness were:

*“Availability of Support structures that promote spiritual wellness of learners are Pastors and spiritual care”.*

*"We have NGO's coming to the correctional centre it is very supportive and effective."*

*"Availability of Support structures that promote spiritual wellness of learners are Pastors and spiritual care".*

*"Yes, we do have [a] Bible College that teaches our offenders through post until they receive certificates. We have Shembe pastors, holy Quran readers and Bible College who comes and conduct services inside the centre."*

*"Religious, spiritual care services and social work programmes teach about moral lessons."*

*"Priest and pastors come to promote the spiritual wellness of learners."*

*"We have our chaplain to promote spiritual wellness in the centre, and we also welcome pastors from different churches."*

*"Some learners get spiritual material through the post office."*

*"The centre invites pastors and other spiritual care services to motivate learners."*

*"We have a strong support structure of spiritual wellness here. Different religious groups and churches from the community come to motivate and teach moral lessons to our learners."*

From the above responses, it was clear that the Ubuntu principle is practised in the correctional schools. They collaborate with the various support structure to enhance teaching and learning and promote the spiritual wellness of juvenile learners. This collaboration with stakeholders and the correctional schools is necessary for the support and promotion of spiritual wellness of juvenile offender learners to change to better citizens.

It was clear that these support structure available in the correctional schools are effective in assisting juvenile offender learners to value and increase insight and understanding of their purpose in life, which is necessary for teaching and learning and rehabilitation.

### **Challenges that threaten spiritual wellness**

From the findings, it was revealed that there are challenges that are a threat to spiritual wellness. These challenges, such as negative pressure from peer, family and society, influence the juvenile offender learners. It was revealed that juvenile offender learners who are reluctant to participate in spiritual programmes, they most likely to be pressured to join gangsters in the correctional school.

This was evident from the statement said by the teachers in schools.

*"...Some juvenile learners are not like a normal society; if they stop participating in spiritual programmes, they act wild and show unacceptable behaviour."*

*"..participation depends on the juvenile offender learners' family background, and some juvenile offender learners do it for changing their behaviour while others do it to impress friends or teachers."*

The findings indicated that insufficient participation in spiritual programmes juvenile learners is a challenge that might jeopardises positive morality and positive learning environment, which are essential for learning and rehabilitation.

## **Discussion**

From the findings, it was clear that encouraging and teaching juvenile offender learners to attend various spiritual programmes helps them to have a positive outlook in life, guidance into moral ways of living in dignity, personal and academic growth and cope more effectively in their learning and teaching at the correctional schools. The current findings coincide with what Mucina (2011) articulate, that spiritual wellness is a guiding voice that protects and guides the juvenile learner into moral ways of living, dignity, respect and pride shared with other people. Ballentine (2010) study also asserts that juvenile learners with higher levels of spirituality have improved social relationships, self-discipline and coping skills.

Teachers need to collaborate with stakeholders, in supporting, teaching and encouraging juvenile learners to respect their beliefs, values and to value being human and respect for others in life. These values are crucial in learning and teaching, tolerate other people and understanding the moral values needed for rehabilitation. These findings resonate with the framework of Ubuntu that accentuates the collaboration of community members together as an integral part on supporting juvenile learners, to value being human, display positive values, morals and acceptable behaviours in the society (Mulaudzi, 2014).

Generally, the collaboration with the stakeholders is viewed as positive for the success of education imparted to the juvenile offender learners. This collaboration of stakeholders and the correctional schools is necessary to support of spiritual wellness and enhance teaching and learning of juvenile offender learners.

From the findings, it was clear that spiritual support inculcates hope and aspirations in juvenile learners' life. The inspirational messages imparted to them gives hope and motivate them to change as they have a second chance in life. These findings are supported by Gold (2010) who emphasises the fact that education that supports spiritual wellness in the correctional centre schools benefits positive moral values getting a meaning and purpose to their life so that they can change and avoid committing crimes.

Moreover, spiritual support focuses on assisting the juvenile offender learner to search for the meaning and purpose of existence. For successful teaching and learning, teachers must teach and encourage juvenile learner about moral values and



reaching a state of inner peace and a sense of wholeness, respect one's beliefs and values (Dzulkifli & Yasin, 2010).

Findings revealed challenges faced by teachers in teaching and learning in the correctional schools. Some of the challenges include negative influence from peers who do not participate in spiritual programmes, previous negative experiences from family and society. It was revealed that juvenile offender learners who loath to participate in spiritual programmes are pressured to join gangsters, lack discipline, and eventually, they become vicious in the correctional school. These findings resonate with McConnell, Pargament, Ellison and Flannelly (2006) highlighted that lack of spiritual support causes resistance to change, feelings of hopelessness, self-centredness, spiritual conflicts with others and self of which it can exacerbate anxiety, anger, and depression of the juvenile offender learners.

Similarly, a study by Specht, King, Willoughby, Brown, and Smith (2005) concur with the current findings. They articulate that juvenile offender learner who lack spiritual support exhibit lower levels of anxiety, stress and depression, unsuccessful in learning, and averse to rehabilitate.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the current study provides important information related to the support of juvenile offender learners' spiritual wellness in correctional schools. The findings of the study indicated that the support of spiritual wellness enhances teaching and learning and behavioural change; it induces hope and aspirations of the juvenile offender learners. This finding further supports the importance of promoting spiritual wellness as a tool for rehabilitation that prepares juvenile learners for re-entry in their communities as productive and better citizens. Teachers and the correctional centre management should be aware of the importance of supporting juvenile learners' spiritual wellness and the existence of challenges that impede the support of spiritual wellness so that these challenges might be under control. Therefore, teachers should support spiritual wellness of juvenile learners by educating, inculcating Ubuntu principles that are built upon harmony, kindness, compassion, morals and values, caring for others and ensure there is cooperation among them (Mulaudzi, 2014).

By knowing how spiritual support could help juvenile offender learners to excel in their teaching and learning and cope with any learning disturbances, much information could be derived to enhance the amount of support provided. Hence, this study hopes to contribute to the research on how to support and enhance juvenile learners' learning and teaching, academic achievement, promote spiritual wellness, and rehabilitation.

## Recommendation

The study, therefore, recommends that teachers and security official attain proper training on how to identify the spiritual challenges of juvenile learners and address them in order to improve their learning, wellness and rehabilitate. Also, the Department of Basic Education should frequently support teachers with in-service training, monitor the quarterly performance of juvenile learners' assessment to make their teaching and learning more meaningful.

The Department of Correctional Services can do this through collaboration with various stakeholders who have knowledge and expertise in the spiritual wellness scope. Even more, the DCS should promote Ubuntu through collaborating with other stakeholders and other government departments since 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'. In this way, the Ubuntu theory will be realised in supporting juvenile learners in correctional schools.

Specifically, the study recommends that correctional schools to engage daily or regular teaching on the importance of morals, values, purpose in life because it is crucial for rehabilitation and enhance spiritual wellness. This can be in a daily correctional schools' programme such as morning assembly. Besides, integrating spiritual wellness across all curriculum or subjects can also enhance the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional wellness.

## References

- [1] Astin, A. (1993). *Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- [2] Ballentine, H.W. (2010). *The Relationship between Wellness and Academic Success in First Year-Year College Students*. PhD Thesis, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- [3] Constitution of South Africa (1996). *Constitution of the Republic Of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- [4] Creswell, J.W. (2007). *qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [5] Department of Correctional Services (2008). *The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services. The Department Of Correctional Service's Management and Information System (MIS)*. Pretoria: Government Printers
- [6] Department of Correctional Services (2018). *Correctional Services Annual Report 2017/2018*. Pretoria: Government Printers
- [7] Dzulkipli, M.A. &Yasin Md, A.S. (2010). *The Relationship between Social Support and Psychological Problems among Students*. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 1(3), 110-116.

- [8] Frantz, M.J. (2017). *Offender Reintegration: A Challenge to the Uniting Reformed Church in S.A., Porterville, In its Ministry Of Reconciliation, Restoration and Healing to the Released Offender in the Local Community.* Unpublished M. Thesis, Cape Town: University Of Stellenbosch.
- [9] Gold, J.M. (2010). *Counselling and Spirituality: Integrating Spiritual and Clinical Orientations.* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill
- [10] Grayling, C. (2012). *Rehabilitation revolution- next steps announced.* Retrieved 12 June 2019 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rehabilitation-revolutionnext-steps-announced>
- [11] Gyekye, K. (1997). *Tradition and modernity. Philosophical reflections on the African experiences.* Oxford university press: New York.
- [12] Hawley, J., Murphy, I. & Souto-Otero, M. (2013). *Correctional centre Education and Training in Europe Current State-Of-Play and Challenges.* A summary report authored for the European Commission by GHK Consulting. Retrieved 26 March 2020 from: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/prison\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/prison_en.pdf).
- [13] Henning, E., van Ransburg, W., & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: van Schaik publishers.
- [14] Hettler, B. (2000). *Six dimensions of Wellness Model.* Stevens Point, USA: National Wellness Institute.
- [15] Magano, M.D. & Ramnarain, U. (2015). *Including the Excluded: Educating the Vulnerable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.* Cape Town: Pearson publishers.
- [16] Mbiti, J.S. (1992). *African Religions and Philosophy.* London: Heineman.
- [17] McConnell, K.M., Pargament, K.L., Ellison, C.G. & Flannelly, K.J. (2006). Examining the lines between spiritual struggles and symptoms of psychopathology in a National sample. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(12), 1469-1484.
- [18] Merriam, S.B. (2002). *Case Study Research in Education. A Qualitative Approach.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- [19] Mucina, D.D. (2011). *Ubuntu: A Regenerative Philosophy for Rupturing Racist Colonial Stories of Dispossession.* Doctoral thesis, Toronto: University of Toronto.
- [20] Mulaudzi, F.M. (2014). *Nursing leadership within the African philosophy of Ubuntu.* Unpublished PhD thesis. Pretoria: university of Pretoria.
- [21] Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Leech, N.L. (2007). *Sampling Designs In Qualitative Research: Making The Sampling Process More Public.* The Qualitative Report,

- 12(2), 238-254. Retrieved 29 June 2019 Available:  
[Http://Www.Nova.Edu?Sss/QR12-2/Onwuugbuzie1.Pdf](http://Www.Nova.Edu?Sss/QR12-2/Onwuugbuzie1.Pdf).
- [22] Ramose, M. (1999). *African Ubuntu Philosophy through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books.
- [23] Rasmussen, K., Northrup, P. & Colson, R. (2017). *Handbook of research on competencybased education in university setting*. West Florida: IGI Global publishers.
- [24] Schirmer, S.L. (2008). Education behind bars. *The Current: The Public Policy Journal of the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs*, 11(2), 23-39.
- [25] Shutte, A. (2001). *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- [26] Specht, J.A, King, G.A, Willoughby, C., Brown, E.G., & Smith, L. (2005). Issues and Insights: Spirituality: A coping mechanism in the lives of adults with congenital disabilities. *Counselling and Values*, 50, 51-62.
- [27] Witmer, J.M., Sweeney, T.J. & Myers, J. E. (1998). *The wheel of wellness*. Greensboro, NC: Authors.

# The Involvement of Stakeholders in Promoting the Wellness of Juvenile Offenders in Selected South African Correctional Schools

**Forget Makhurane**

PhD candidate, Department of Educational Psychology,  
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

## Abstract

The main focus of the study was to explore the involvement of stakeholders in promoting the wellness of juvenile offenders in South African correctional schools. Two teachers and three juveniles were purposefully selected to complete open ended questionnaires from two juvenile centres in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The major aim of the study was to identify how different stakeholders can facilitate the attainment of wellness among juvenile offenders. The *ubuntu* and wellness theories were used as lenses to carry out the study. Research ethic procedures were followed. In order to get vivid experience of participants, qualitative method was used to collect and analyse data. Findings revealed that stakeholder involvement varied with some being more involved while others were lacking. This compromised effective rehabilitation. It was recommended that the involvement of stakeholders should be intensified in order to have a greater impact on the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders.

**Keywords:** stakeholders, wellness, juveniles, rehabilitation, recidivism, offenders

## Introduction

Rehabilitation of juvenile offenders should be effective in order to reduce recidivism. Recidivism is a societal problem since the tax payers' money is used for the up keep of inmates who return to crime after undergoing rehabilitation. In the United States of America, studies showed that juveniles who became adult offenders cost the state between 1.5 billion dollars to 1.8 billion dollars each (Macomber, Skiba, Blackmon, Hart, Mambrino, Richie & Grigorenko 2010). South Africa has also experienced high recidivism rate which was estimated to be about 80% in 2012 (ReAducate 2012). Owing to the negative impact of ineffective rehabilitation to society, the Department of Correctional Services states that the rehabilitation of offenders should not be viewed as the responsibility of one department but as a societal responsibility (Department of Correctional Services 2005). According to the wellness model, there

are different wellness dimensions that an individual need to accomplish in order to attain total wellness (Hetler 1976). These dimensions are social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, career and physical (Hetler 1976). In order to promote different wellness dimensions among juvenile offenders, it is necessary therefore to involve various stakeholders who play different roles in the lives of juvenile offenders. Moreover, crime and recidivism are societal problems that need members of the community to stand together (Ngabonziza & Singh 2012). This is in line with the philosophy of *ubuntu* which states that every member of the community has a role to play in ensuring that a healthy society is maintained as he considers himself part of the whole (Metz & Gaie 2010).

China has implemented an effective programme that ensures different stakeholders play a vital role in juvenile rehabilitation (Chen 2000). According to the same author, some of the stakeholders who are effectively involved include parents, public leaders, Government officials, unions, schools, prospective employers, correctional staff and many more. In South Africa, stakeholder involvement has been identified as key to effective offender rehabilitation (Department of Correctional Services 2005). The implementation needs to be intensified to attain a higher success rate in juvenile rehabilitation.

The family is considered as the basic unit of society that can play a significant role in the rehabilitation of juveniles and in the aftercare programme (Department of Correctional Services 2005). Research has shown that detaining juveniles closer to their families improves their mood and also reduces recidivism (Walker & Bishop 2016). In South Africa family involvement in the rehabilitation of juveniles is considered to be crucial also (Department of Correctional Services 2005). However, some research findings have revealed that in reality some juveniles are detained far away from their families and stay for longer periods without getting in contact with their families (Muntingh & Ballard 2012). In the state of Missouri in the United States of America, juveniles are detained closer to their families as much as possible and their families play an active role in their rehabilitation and this has resulted in successful rehabilitation (Dubin 2012).

After care programmes play a vital role in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and therefore such programmes need to be more effective and individualised (James, Asscher, Jan, Stams & Van Der Laan 2016). These programmes are implemented outside correctional centres and therefore relevant stakeholders need to be very active and effective to ensure a high success rate. Offenders such as those on drug and substance abuse rehabilitation need to continue receiving treatment after release to avoid a relapse and re offending (Shrum 2004). In South Africa, programmes such as *Khulisa* play a vital role in ensuring that offenders are given the necessary support (NICRO 2014).

Research has shown that most juveniles commit crime because of poverty in South Africa due to the increasing gap between the poor and the rich (Langa 2006). Juveniles

therefore need to be rehabilitated and equipped with skills that can help them live a fulfilling life and stay away from crime. *Ubuntu* philosophy advocates for fair distribution of resources in society for the benefit of all (Broodryk 2006). The Government should therefore ensure that resources are evenly distributed by the state to ensure equity. During rehabilitation, career guidance and counseling should be given to juveniles so that they can make better and informed choices on careers to sustain their livelihood without resorting to crime. They should also be equipped with relevant skills that can help them fend for themselves and their families after release. In Ireland, an effective after care project called HOPE was used as a way of preparing juveniles for life after release by assisting them with housing, training programmes and other related issues (Lorenz 2002). Different stakeholders were assigned to look at the different needs of juveniles. By involving stakeholders to deal with specific needs of juveniles, released offenders were in a better position to adjust as their basic needs were met. If juveniles are provided with basic needs, it is likely that juvenile crime and recidivism may be reduced. In China also, correctional staff liaise with workplaces, schools and neighbourhood by paying them visits to discuss the return of juvenile offenders and give reports on their transformations (Chen 2000).

If communities are made aware of these transformations, they are likely to accept and embrace juveniles on their return. The philosophy of *ubuntu* strives for equal treatment for all and therefore by embracing returning juveniles, this philosophy will also be embraced.

### **Problem Statement**

In 2012, South Africa had one of the highest incarceration rate in the world which was double that of any European country (Wamsley 2012). This state of affairs is a cause for concern which needs special attention. The other concern raised was that the recidivism rate was reported to be very high in the country (McAree 2011; NICRO 2014). This high incarceration and recidivism rates may signal ineffective rehabilitation programmes. According to research done in South Africa, most offenders leave correctional centres the same way they went in due to ineffective offender rehabilitation (NICRO 2009). These revelations therefore create a gap that needs to be filled in with regard to what can be done to ensure effective offender rehabilitation in South Africa. Through the lens of *ubuntu*, collaborative and collective ways are required to ensure striving for a common cause for a better life for all in society. With regard to achieving effective rehabilitation and reducing recidivism, it is important for different stakeholders to work hand in hand to achieve a successful rehabilitation programme.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, *ubuntu* philosophy as well as the wellness theory were used as lenses to carry out the study. *Ubuntu* encourages people to work together in different settings for the good of all (Maphalala 2017). It also looks at the significance of the



interconnectedness of human society with the emphasis that a person is incomplete without community (Tutu 1999). In view of these philosophies, the study sought to explore how different stakeholders can work together to ensure the effective rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. According to *ubuntu*, success needs people to put hands together (Mangena 2016). From this perspective, the implication is that stakeholders should come together in order to achieve a successful rehabilitation programme. The wellness theory fits in this study since it stipulates that for wellness to be achieved, different dimensions of wellness have to be attained first (Hetler 1976). These dimensions can be attained through the involvement of different stakeholders who play different roles. Psychologists and social workers for an example may help to promote emotional wellness among juvenile offenders while on the other hand medical personnel may help promote physical wellness through the treatment of different diseases.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research design was used in this study to enable the collection of data in the natural settings and to give participants the opportunity to express their experiences with regard to wellness (Creswell 2013). This method also allowed the researcher to focus on the perspective of participants, bearing in mind the context in which wellness was taking place (Braun & Clarke 2013). Since the focus was on the wellness of juvenile offenders, the phenomenological approach was seen as the relevant approach owing to its focus on a specific phenomenon (Rashid Shah & Al-Bargi 2013). To discover meanings attached by juveniles on their behaviour and how they interpreted their situations the interpretive paradigm was used (Woods 2006). Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were learners at correctional schools and teachers who were involved in the education of juveniles there. In each school three juveniles and two teachers were selected to participate. Open ended questionnaires were used as data collection instruments to allow participants to express their experiences and opinions.

The researcher got permission from the Department of Correctional Services as well as the University of South Africa's ethics committee before embarking on the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study as well as the procedures to be followed including the anonymity and confidentiality of their identities. They were also informed about their rights including the right to withdraw from the study without any penalty. Consent forms were completed by participants before the study commenced.

### **Data Analysis**

As data was qualitatively collected, qualitative approach was used to analyse this data through coding, categorising and developing themes (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smith 2010). The researcher started by colour coding findings with similar meanings which were later put into categories according to similarities in meanings. These categories

were then merged according to meanings to form themes. These themes formed headings of findings and were used as headings in discussing findings.

## **Findings from the study**

### **Promotion of physical wellness**

Juveniles were involved in a number of sporting and recreational activities that promoted their physical wellness. Both schools provided a variety of sporting activities ranging from soccer, rugby and many more. Soccer was the most popular sport based on the responses given by juveniles when asked which sports they were involved in. In school A, the responses were as follows; Participant 1 *"Yes, ^play soccer"* and Participant 2, *"Yes, soccer"*. On the contrary in School B participation was not adequate as confessed by Participant 1 said, *"No"* and Participant 3 also said *"No"*. In School A, there was also mention of external stakeholder involvement in the promotion of the physical wellness of juveniles as teacher Participant 1 explained, *"... sometimes external companies come to provide extra programmes"*. The involvement by external stakeholders seemed to be limited as they were only mentioned by one participant in one school.

Medical personnel were the other stakeholders who were mentioned as being actively involved. Both juveniles and teachers confirmed the existence of medical centres and personnel in their centres. The revelation came when juveniles were asked if there were medical facilities in their centres. Participant 1 in school A said, *"Yes, hospital in the centre"* and Participant 3 was also in agreement when he stated, *"Yes, Hospital/clinic in the centre"*. Teachers also concurred with what juveniles said as participant 1 puts it, *"Hospital with qualified staff"* and Participant 2 explained further by saying, *"There are medical sisters on duty 24 hours a day as well as a medical doctor who comes on Thursdays"*.

### **Inadequate career guidance**

In both schools, juveniles expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of adequate career guidance to help them make informed career choices. When asked if they had received career guidance, there were negative sentiments from Participant 1 in school A who said *"I have not received any guidance at this centre"*, and Participant 2 who also said, *"Not yet, but still studying"*. This indicated that career guidance was not adequately provided. In school B, Participant 3 also made a negative remark on career guidance when he stated that one of the challenges he was facing with regard to career choices was, *"Lack of information on careers"*.

On the contrary, teachers in School A said that they were providing some form on guidance on careers as Teacher Participant 1 said, *"I provide career guidance as a Life orientation educator. There is also a psychologist to assist"*. Participant 2 also indicated that he was aware that some form of career guidance was being offered at the school as he recalled, *"LO covers career guidance, Career days at college (name given) but only*

*if inmates qualify to leave the centre temporarily*". In school B one teacher was not aware of any career guidance being provided to juveniles but Participant 1 declared, *"Yes, two educators are qualified career counsellors. We assist learners with career guidance. We host a career day once a year where we invite external stakeholders"*.

The contradictions from teachers and juveniles cast suspicion on what was really taking place. It is however clear that the dissatisfaction expressed by juveniles who are supposed to be the recipients of such programmes indicate that the programme was not adequately provided.

### **Promotion of spiritual wellness**

Religious and some spiritual groups were credited for playing a pivotal role in promoting the spiritual wellness of juveniles. The acknowledgements came from both juveniles and teachers in the study. According to teachers, religious groups were frequently interacting with juveniles and offering the much needed spiritual and emotional support. Revelations came out when teachers were asked if there were religious groups that were coming to visit juveniles. Participant 2 in school A said, *"Yes, Different groups from different dominions"*. In school B also different religious groups were also involved as alluded by Participant 1 when he confirmed by saying, *"Yes, Christian groups, Muslim groups and Rasta groups etc."*. The visit by religious groups played a very significant role as juvenile Participant 3 in school A explained that, *"... they teach me about good things in life"*. Juvenile Participant 1 also expressed satisfaction on the impact these groups had on his faith when he declared, *"Yes, they help me by spreading the word of God as I believe in God .."*. In school B also complementary sentiments were echoed by juveniles as Participant 1 puts it, *"They encourage me to learn and behave well"*. Participant 2 expressed spiritual and emotional fulfilment as a result of the interaction with these groups as he optimistically said, *"Yes, they encourage us, give us hope, help me feel accepted"*.

Besides external spiritual stakeholders, these centres had their own spiritual offices with spiritual workers who were providing spiritual and emotional support to juveniles. Teachers gave testimony to the availability of such services as in school B, Participant 2 explained when asked if internal service providers were available and utilised by saying, *"Yes, there are spiritual workers that come on a daily basis to facilitate programmes."*. In school A, the availability of such officials and services were also confirmed by Participant 1 when he indicated this as another way of providing spiritual support by saying, *"Also from members working in the units and the spiritual care offices"*.

Findings therefore revealed that both internal and external stakeholders were playing a significant role in promoting the spiritual and emotional wellness of juvenile offenders. These initiatives seemed to have had a positive impact on imparting the wellness of juveniles by helping them to cope with their stay in correctional centres.

## **Provision of psycho-social support**

The emotional and social wellness of juvenile offenders were promoted through the involvement of different stakeholders from both within and outside correctional centres. Social workers and psychologists were identified as the most valuable service providers in this regard. Despite teachers indicating that they were referring most cases to psychologists, some juveniles were not satisfied at the services provided by these stakeholders. Participant 1 in school A was not convinced at usefulness of social workers and psychologists when asked about the psycho social support he got in correctional centres by saying, *"I get only support from my family who come and visit"*. Participant 3 also painted a negative picture on the services provided by social workers and psychologists when he explained how he dealt with emotional stress by saying, *"I talk to others/communicate with people, roommates"*.

Teachers on their side indicated that they had limited capacity to help juveniles and most of the cases that required emotional and psychological support were referred to social workers and psychologists. Participant 1 in school A indicated that he referred such cases to *"Psychologists as well as social workers"*. Participant 2 also echoed the same sentiments by stating that, *"Psychologists come to the centre"*. They further explained that it was not only psychologists and social workers who were actively involved in this regard but there were other stakeholders involved. Participant 1 elaborated by saying, *"Unit managers and Case officers provide support"*. Participant 2 further elaborated by saying, *"Social workers have programmes that involve the inmates support structures e.g. family if needed"*. Participant 1 in school B further stated that he was also getting involved in assisting juveniles when he said, *"I counsel them"*.

## **Promoting intellectual wellness**

In an endeavour to promote the intellectual wellness of juveniles, teachers were using different resources as Participant 1 in school A stated that he was using, *"Technological resources where possible and visual resources"*. Participant 2 on the other hand mentioned the use of, *"Library, internet, media, newspapers, magazines and speakers"*. Despite putting more effort to provide quality education, teachers were facing various challenges as noted by Participant 2 in school B who complained by saying, *"We don't have many resources. That is our challenge. We use textbooks"*. Some resources could not be used unfortunately as Participant 1 in school B further commented that, *"... books, periodicals. Unfortunately, no newspapers as we try to discourage smoking"*.

The library services have a role to play in promoting the intellectual wellness of juveniles. In both schools, library services were available. The utilisation of these services however seemed to be a bit limited because of different reasons. Some juveniles felt the books in their libraries were of no significant value as Participant 1 complained that, *"There are not enough books in the library"*. Participant 2 in the same

school confessed that he didn't utilise the service when he said, *"I have never used it even once"*. In school B the availability of library services was acknowledged by juveniles when they were asked if there were such services as Participant 1 said, "Yes", Participant 2, "Yes" and Participant 3 also said, "Yes".

In contradiction to the views of juveniles, teachers were satisfied with the library services. This was attested by responses by teachers in school A when asked if the library was fully functional as both Participant 1 and 2 said, "Yes". In school B, participants even stressed that the use of library services was reinforced as Participant 1 explained, *"Visiting the library is compulsory"*. Participant 2 went further to elaborate by saying, *"On Fridays we have reading sessions to assist them with their reading and writing skills and also motivate them to use the library."* The contradictions from juveniles and teachers may indicate that library services were available although their utilisation by juveniles seemed to have been limited.

As part of attaining intellectual wellness, individuals need to keep up to date with current affairs. Incarceration may limit easy access to information. Keeping in touch with what happens in the outside world may help offenders to easily adjust when they are released. Responses were different when juveniles were asked how they got up to date with the outside world. Some of them seemed to be confined to their spaces and had little access to what was happening outside as Participant 1 in school A remarked, *"Not up to date"*. In school B, things seemed different as corroborated by Participant 2 with this statement, *"I watch TV, listen to the radio. Weekend I am out of prison and from coaches outside"*. Participant 3 also indicated a similar situation when he said, *"TV, news, Radio."*

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Promotion of physical wellness**

The availability of SRAC programmes was seen as a positive move towards the promotion of physical wellness. Physical activities and exercises in particular have been identified as good habits for promoting physical wellness (Hetler 1976). Lack of participation in these programmes was a cause for concern to the researcher as this may have a negative impact on the promotion of physical wellness. Various stakeholders who facilitated the implementation of such programmes also deserve to be commended. Having medical facilities and health personnel in correctional centres was also applauded as the health of juveniles were taken care of. The promotion of physical wellness involves offering treatment when one has been affected by diseases (Hetler 1976). In the United States of America 47% deaths were reported in 1999 due to lack of proper medical care (Shirk 2009). This shows that lack of medical care can have severe consequences and hinder the promotion of physical wellness. A report made to the Parliament of South Africa in 2014 stated that there were skills shortages in the medical field in South African correctional centres (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2014). For this reason, expressions by juvenile offenders that the services

provided were not satisfactory cannot be dismissed. More health personnel should be employed in juvenile centres in order to promote the physical wellness of juveniles more effectively.

### **Inadequate career guidance**

Career guidance and counselling help learners to choose careers that are consistent with their interests and abilities thereby leading to job satisfaction (Hetler 1976). Inadequate career guidance as expressed by juveniles on the other hand may result in juveniles choosing careers that are not consistent with their personalities and capabilities. This may result in many juveniles not pursuing careers where they can attain job satisfaction and stay longer. Job dissatisfaction may result in released offenders going back to crime. Lack of career guidance in correctional schools were also reported in Gauteng previously where it was revealed that most juveniles were not getting adequate guidance (Magano 2016). There is need for more vocational training and programmes that may lead to employment because getting employment may lead to change in behaviour by offenders (Ngabonziza & Singh 2012). In Los Angeles, USA, even though juveniles are sent to restricted settings as a last resort, authorities ensure these settings have high staff supervision and ensure offenders attend school and get involved in some of vocational training (Los Angeles County Probation Department 2013). The system seems to work well as most offenders get employed after release.

The involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations such as Khulisa and Brothers for Life in South Africa who organise job placements for released offenders is a positive move by the Department of Correctional Services in engaging relevant stakeholders. Such initiatives should be intensified for the benefit of released offenders especially juveniles. Curriculum in correctional schools should also be aligned to the needs of the job market to enable graduates from such schools to compete positively with others in the job market. Schools should liaise effectively with potential employers and institutions that offer training in order to have relevant and useful educational programmes (Macomber et al 2010). During career expositions, as was the case with one school, the net should be cast wide to expose juveniles to a wide range of careers so that juveniles get as much information on careers as they can.

### **Promotion of spiritual wellness**

In both schools that took part in the study, the involvement of religious based organisations as well as spiritual workers were reported to be positive. These organisations were also reportedly to be actively involved even in previous years such as in 2014 where it was reported that there were 1794 spiritual workers providing services to inmates (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2014). The involvement by spiritual workers has been identified as pivotal in the rehabilitation of offenders and their engagement has been utilised in other countries such as Myanmar (Korff 2010).



Spiritual intervention helps to create hope among inmates and create a sense of purpose and meanings in their lives (Palmbeach 2017). It also helps in behavioural change as attested by most juvenile participants as well as teachers. Effective promotion of spiritual wellness also helps offenders to change their attitudes and to be in a better position to understand the consequences of their actions (Hawley 2011).

### **Psycho social support**

In South Africa, rehabilitation is viewed as a societal responsibility although the Department of Correctional Services takes a leading role (Department of Correctional Services 2005). The correctional officer should be a role model and rehabilitator as he is in a position to positively or negatively persuade offenders. In China, correctional officers are expected to act like parents to offenders (Chen 2000). Teachers are also in the forefront of rehabilitation especially in South Africa where education and training are placed as the core processes of offender rehabilitation (Department of Correctional Services 2005).

Family involvement is also crucial in offender rehabilitation (Department of Correctional Services 2005). Findings in this study revealed that although most schools were trying to involve family members of juveniles, there was in actual fact inadequate participation by the family as a unit. Prior findings also revealed that in 2012, 40% of juveniles in correctional centres in South Africa had no family visits in three months (Muntingh & Ballard 2012). There has been a global call for juveniles to be incarcerated closer to their families as this has proven to improve their mood and reduce chances of re offending (Walker & Bishop 2016). On the contrary, incarcerating juveniles far from their homes leads to exposure to anti-social peers and in Scotland it was reported to be responsible for about 14.5% suicide attempts among juveniles in detention (Little 2006). The Family Functional Therapy is a typical example of a system that make use of family involvement in rehabilitation. In this approach, the family is equipped with tools needed for problem solving and after care parenting (Greenwood 2006). However, the global transformations in family structure has resulted in negative family involvement. In particular, dysfunctional and broken families pose a challenge in establishing family contacts (Korff 2010).

Partnerships with the community is also very important and therefore correctional centres should get support from communities where juveniles come from and information should be exchanged between the two institutions (Centre for The Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2009). In this study, community involvement seemed to be lacking. Members of the community should be knowledgeable about the rehabilitation process and be willing to voluntarily participate in such programmes. Prior research findings in South Africa revealed that community partnership in offender rehabilitation was lacking and recommendations were made that this should be intensified (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2014).



During the study, there were mixed feelings and reactions on the role played by social workers and psychologists. These professionals play a vital role especially in promoting the emotional and social wellness of juveniles. Social workers offer counselling and therapeutic programmes while psychologists cover the juveniles' psychological aspects. Social workers also help in bringing families of juveniles in the rehabilitation intervention programmes. Whereas teachers indicated that they referred most of the matters to social workers and psychologists, most juveniles seemed not satisfied with the services provided by these stakeholders. There have been even reports of shortages of social workers and psychologists in correctional centres as in South Africa. In 2014 there were only 68 psychologists serving 150 000 inmates which equates to one psychologist serving 2200 inmates (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2014). Other countries such as Bangladesh have also experienced a shortage of psychologists as well, thereby affecting the promotion of the wellness of juveniles (Lotse 2006).

### **Challenges in promoting intellectual wellness**

Lack of resources and personnel were identified as barriers to the provision of quality education that promotes intellectual wellness among juvenile offenders. Shortage of staff does not only deprive juveniles of the opportunity to attain intellectual wellness but has other implications such as vulnerability to abuse due to lack of supervision (Kempsi 2010). The amount of time spent in class is also very crucial. In South Africa a research was done which showed that most learners spent little time in class in Correctional schools (Muntingh & Ballard 2012). Teachers play a significant role in promoting the wellness of juvenile offenders during rehabilitation. Even though their basic function is to offer education and vocational programmes, teachers deal with juveniles on a daily basis and are expected to offer some form of counselling to the learners under their care. Teachers therefore need specialised training to deal with juvenile offenders. As important stakeholders, teachers should also provide relevant education that can change the behaviour of offenders. In this generation, skills training may help to change the behaviour of offenders as practical training has been found to lead to more likelihood of getting employment and reducing recidivism significantly in the USA (Young, Greer & Church 2017). Institutions of higher learning such as universities and TVET colleges should also be involved in equipping teachers with relevant skills that can help them teach more effectively and efficiently.

Resources are necessary for teaching and learning to be effective so that intellectual wellness can be promoted. These resources include books, stationery and even proper classrooms. Most juveniles expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of books in the libraries. Similar findings were reported by Magano (2016), when she stated that in one Gauteng correctional centre, the library was there but most books in that library were irrelevant. Partnership or collaboration with other stakeholders such as book publishers can go a long way in solving the problem of shortage of reading materials. Some of the stakeholders can be asked to donate relevant updated books.

Keeping up to date with current affairs and seeking new information helps to promote intellectual wellness (Viterbo University 2006). When juveniles get up to date and current affairs information, they may attain intellectual wellness.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that the attainment of wellness brings a holistic approach in rehabilitation. The promotion of wellness is however a complex process bearing in mind the different dimensions that one needs to achieve in order to attain total wellness. For this reason, rehabilitation of juvenile offenders cannot be left solely in the hands of the Department of Correctional Services. Different stakeholders need to work hand in hand to ensure offenders attain these different wellness dimensions. These wellness dimensions as articulated by Hetler (1976), are social, spiritual, career, physical, emotional and intellectual. The involvement of stakeholders is necessary as each one of them can play a role in promoting a particular dimension of wellness. As much as the Department of Correctional Services has policies that outlines collaboration among stakeholders, the implementation of such policies seemed to be lacking, according to some responses given by participants. Juveniles were not satisfied by the services provided by social workers, psychologists and even teachers in some cases.

With the Department of Correctional Services shifting rehabilitation to focus more on education and training, teachers find themselves at the forefront of offender rehabilitation. For this reason, teachers should be well equipped in order to effectively promote the wellness of juvenile offenders. This can be done by providing career guidance, teaching social skills and many more. Other stakeholders also need to be actively involved to promote wellness dimensions. The study was carried out from a wellness theoretical perspective and therefore the attainment of different dimensions is seen as a prerequisite to the realisation of full wellness. From the *ubuntu* perspective, collective responsibility should be adopted to ensure the success of the rehabilitation programme. by bringing different stakeholders. In adopting the philosophy of ubuntu, community members work for the common good for all which include ensuring a successful rehabilitation programme.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that different stakeholders should work in collaboration with each other in order to promote different wellness dimensions. Each stakeholder has a significant role to play in rehabilitation. There should be enough and adequately trained teachers in correctional schools to ensure effective teaching and learning. Social workers and psychologists should be proactive and not only reactive in order to avoid offenders getting into difficult situations before helping. Effective collaboration should also be in place with institutions of higher learning such as TVET colleges and universities so that they can provide skills training to both teachers and learners. Communities need to know what is happening in

juvenile offender rehabilitation so that they can appreciate and welcome released offenders knowing that they have undergone a reformatory process through rehabilitation and correction. Having knowledge and appreciation of the rehabilitation programmes can also help destroy the stigma associated with ex-offenders as being the same despite undergoing the rehabilitation process. The Chinese approach whereby public officials visit juvenile offenders during their incarceration can also help boost the moral and self-esteem of juveniles (Chen 2000). More staff members should also be employed to manage gangs. Gangs are a big threat in the promotion of wellness since they usually promote antisocial skills among offenders.

## References

- [1] Braun, V & Clarke V. 2013. *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage.
- [2] Broodryk, J. 2006. *Ubuntu African coping skills, theory and practice*. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy.
- [3] Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. 2009. *Community involvement in prisons*. Available: <https://www.csvr.org/> [Accessed: 12 February 2017]
- [4] Chen, X. 2000. Educating and correcting juvenile delinquents: The Chinese approach. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 51(4), 334-346.
- [5] Creswell, J.W. 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- [6] Department of Correctional Services. 2005. *White paper on corrections in South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- [7] Dubin, J. 2012. Metamorphosis. How Missouri rehabilitates juvenile offenders. *American Educator/ Summer 2012*.
- [8] Greenwood, P.W. 2006. *Changing Lives. Delinquency prevention as crime control Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
- [9] Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W. & Smith, B. 2010. *Finding your way to qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- [10] Hettler, B. 1976. *Six dimensions of wellness*. Stevens Point: National Wellness Institute.
- [11] James, C., Asscher, J.J., Jan, G., Stams, M. & Van Der Laanm, P.H. 2016. The effectiveness of aftercare for juvenile and young adult offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 60(10), 1159-1184.
- [12] Kempski, M. 2010. *Juvenile detention centre abuse*. Available:
- [13] <http://www.scribd.com/doc/384395/Juvenile-Detention-Centre-Abuse> [Accessed 24 July 2014].
- [14] Korff, B.P. 2010. *Treatment of juvenile offenders and their reintegration into society*. Pretoria: SAPS, Division: Training: Education Training and Development, Research and Curriculum Development.

- [15] Little, M. 2006. *A social development model of incarceration of juvenile offenders' social network support, exposure to anti-social peers, aggressive offending and psychological adjustment*. Doctoral dissertation. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- [16] Lorenz, P. 2002. The education centre, Fort Mitchel prison, Spike Island. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 53(2), 65-69. Los Angeles County Probation Department. 2013. *Los Angeles County probation department's 2012 annual report*. Available: [http://file.lacounty.gov/probation/cms1\\_197736.pdf](http://file.lacounty.gov/probation/cms1_197736.pdf) [Accessed 17 November 2016].
- [17] Lotse, C. 2006. *Juvenile justice in South Asia: Improving Protection for Children in conflict with the Law*. Available:
- [18] <http://www.unicef.org/rosa/JuvenileinSouthAsia.pdf>. [Accessed: 14 March 2015].
- [19] Macomber, D., Skiba, T., Blackmon, J., Hart, L., Mambrino, E., Richie, T. & Grigorenko, E.L. 2010. Education in juvenile detention facilities in the state of Connecticut: A glance at the system. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 61(3), 223-261.
- [20] Magano, M.D. 2016. The academic wellness and educational success of juvenile offender in a Gauteng correctional school. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 5(1), 148-152.
- [21] Mangena, E. 2016. African ethics through ubuntu: a postmodern exposition. *Africology. The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 9(2), 66-80.
- [22] Maphalala, M.C. 2017. Embracing ubuntu in managing effective classrooms, *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(4), 10237-10249.
- [23] McAree, T. 2011. *Prisoner rehabilitation in South Africa: A case study of Phoenix Zululand's work in Eshowe Correctional facilities*. Available: [http://phoenix-zululand.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/tommy-ISP-2\\_.pdf](http://phoenix-zululand.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/tommy-ISP-2_.pdf)
- [24] Metz, T. & Gaie, J.B.R. 2010. The African ethic of ubuntu/botho: Implications for research on morality. *Journal of Moral Education*, 39(3), 273-290.
- [25] Muntingh, L. & Ballard, C. 2012. *Report on children in prison in South Africa*. Cape Town. Community Law Centre.
- [26] National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of offenders (NICRO). 2009. *National Annual Report*. Johannesburg: NICRO.
- [27] National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of offenders (NICRO). 2014. *The State of South African prisons*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Johannesburg: NICRO Public Education Series.
- [28] Ngabonziza, O. & Singh, S. 2012. Offender reintegration programme and its role in reducing recidivism, Exploring perceptions of the effectiveness of tough enough programme. *Acta Criminologica: Southern African Journal of Criminology: CRIMSA 2011 Conference (Special Edition, 2)*, 87-102.
- [29] Palmbeach. 2017. *Wellness dimensions*. Available:

- [30] <http://www.palmbeach.klz.fl.us/wellness/dimensions> [Accessed 21 May 2017].
- [31] Parliamentary Monitoring Group. 2014. *Rehabilitation and reintegration programme challenges, Correctional Services briefing, 17 September 2014*. Cape Town: Parliament of South Africa.
- [32] Rashid Shar, S. & Al-Bargi, A. 2013. Research paradigms: Researchers' worldviews, theoretical frameworks and study designs. *Arab World English Journal*, 4 (4): 252264.
- [33] ReAducate. 2012. Prisoner Rehabilitation. Available: [http://readucate.org/pages/prison\\_programme.htm](http://readucate.org/pages/prison_programme.htm) [Accessed: 10 April 2016].
- [34] Shirk, M. 2009. *Health care in juvenile detention centres*. Available: <http://www.reportingonhealth.org/fellowships/projects/health-care-Juveniles-detentioncentres>. [Accessed: 6 May 2015].
- [35] Shrum, H. 2004. No longer theory. Correctional practices that work. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 55(3), 225-235.
- [36] Tutu, D. 1999. *No future without forgiveness*. London: Rider, Random House.
- [37] Walker, S.C & Bishop, A.S. 2016. Length of stay therapeutic change and recidivism for incarcerated juvenile offenders. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 55(6), 355376.
- [38] Wamsley, R. 2012. *World female imprisonment list*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: International Centre for Prison Study.
- [39] Woods, P. 2006. *Qualitative research*. Plymouth. University of Plymouth.
- [40] Young, S., Greer, B. & Church, R. 2017. Juvenile delinquency, welfare, justice and therapeutic interventions: A global perspective. *BJPsych Bulletin*, 41(1), 21-29.

# Algerian University During the Corona Virus Pandemic: COVID-19 - Bechar University as a Sample

**Souad Guessar**

PhD, University of Tahri Mohamed- Bechar, Algeria

## Abstract

In March 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the new Corona virus is a global pandemic. The World Health Organization and the public health authority of various countries are working to contain the spread of the virus through quarantine. But these crises raise the level of stress and psychological tension on individuals and society. As well as Algeria is not an exception and this research will be on the extent of the impact of the pandemic on the conduct of lessons at the universities level in Algeria, which were not equipped for such situations during the outbreak of the emerging corona virus, and try to analyze the situation and then proposing some solutions that can work if it hurts humanity and the Algerians, especially an epidemic like the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19).

**Keywords:** Corona, virus, lessons, universities, Algeria

## Introduction

### **The Definition of Corona Virus Pandemic (COVID-19):**

The United Nations Development Programme defined the Corona Virus COVID-19 pandemic as a global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late 2019 year, the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica.

The pandemic is much more than a health crisis; it is also an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. Stressing every one of the countries it touches; it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political effects that will leave deep and longstanding scars. The COVID- 19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closures of schools, universities and colleges. As well as Algeria is not an exception where Algerian universities are not prepared for such situations during the outbreak of the emerging corona virus. Many universities were not fully prepared for E-learning.

## **E-learning**

Knowledge is not only a transfer of information from teacher to student, but also how the student receives this knowledge from a mental point of view, e-learning enables the student to take responsibility in the educational process through exploration, expression and experience, changing roles where the student becomes educated instead of a recipient and the teacher is directed instead of an expert.

Dr. Ghazi Al-Qusaybi says that this education began in Chicago and Moscow in the early 1960s, but it was not born a real birth until the Open University of Britain in 1980, initially mail and television were the main means in e-learning, but now the Internet is playing a distinct role besides the two traditional methods (Abdullah Al-Aziz, 2002), and Salem mentioned that elearning has gone through many stages, including the era of the traditional teacher and from it to the era of multimedia and then the emergence of the internet of information and from it to the second generation of the information network where the design of web sites became more advanced (Abdullah Al-Aziz, 2002).

## **E-Learning Goals**

Some of the goals to be achieved from e-learning include:

- -Providing a rich and multi-source educational environment that serves the educational process in all its aspects.
- Reformulating roles in the way the process of education and learning is carried out in accordance with the developments of educational thought.
- Creating incentives and encouraging communication between the scientific educational system such as communication between teachers and students, university and the surrounding environment.
- Modelling and presenting education in a standard form.
- The transmission of educational experiences through the creation of channels of communication and forums that enable teachers and all those interested in the educational affairs to exchange opinions and discussion through a specific site that brings them together in a virtual room despite the distance.
- Preparing a generation of teachers and learners capable of dealing with the technology and skills of the times and developments in the world.
- Help to spread technology in the society to become an electronic intellectual and keep up with what is going on in the far reaches of the earth.
- Providing education that suits different age groups, taking into account the individual differences between them (Abdullah Al-Aziz, 2002).
- Providing the largest number of people in the community to access education



and training, by overcoming the obstacles of space and time, also reduce the cost of education in the long term, in addition, the provision of e-learning does not require huge budgets to create large buildings and classrooms, and the spread of e-learning also due to the flexibility of learning, and the technical development and intense competition between the providers of study and training programs made these programs accessible to large segments of society, which led in turn to the spread of e-learning.

- E-learning is considered the optimal exploitation of human and material resources; it solves the problem of rare disciplines. (Al-Mabrik, 2002)
- Transform the traditional educational philosophy based on the group to the individual by time, curriculum and exercises depend on the level and skills of the student and not on the average of the group. A distinguished student can apply not dependent on the weak.
- The lowest level student has time to raise his level.

### **E-learning techniques**

E-learning is based on the use of different electronic means in the education process, whether real formal education that takes place within the classroom or distance learning, and these electronic means are: computer, internet, television, radio, video, video conferencing.

1- Computer: It is used as an educational tool to help the teacher and the learner, and has several types or software methods to use the computer in formal or electronic education:

- Training and practice software,
- Special education software,
- Simulation software,
- Dialogue software,
- Problem solving software,
- Survey software,
- -Multimedia software,
- Speech processing software,
- Supermedia software,

2- Internet: where all its subscribers are provided services in all fields of life in general and in the educational process and e-learning in particular, including:

- -E-mail service,

- Information transfer protocol,
- Web service,
- Communication service to another computer,
- Speech service,
- Dialogue service,
- Mailing lists service,
- Finger service for investigation,
- System search service,
- Internet phone call service,
- Internet broadcasting service,
- White page indexing service,
- Automated copying service (Al-Mabrik, 2002),

3- E-book: is a new method of displaying information with its images, movement, audio conferences and film clips in the form of an integrated book that is copied by the bug of CDs, and is browsed through the computer and can be searched for or subject easily ( Ahmed Mohamed, 2004).

4- Visual Book: A book that contains hundreds of pages and provides the reader with information in a visual, audio and readable image, easy to modify and develop by the user, can be read or seen by how many people at the same time from all over the world ( Ahmed Mohamed, 2004).

5- Video Conference: A visual audio communication between several people who are located in geographical lye spaces where ideas, experiences and information elements are discussed and exchanged in an interactive atmosphere aimed at achieving cooperation and mutual understanding ( Ahmed Mohamed, 2004).

6- Satellite programs: This technology is characterized by the speed of transmission of programs and events to all parts of the earth in addition to the possibility of transferring written and spoken messages, and to be used in e-learning (Abdullah Yahya, 2006).

7- Text and graphic images remotely: This technique is used to send symbolic digital information as part of the TV signal to be displayed to the future and be in the form of text or diagram after decoding (Abdullah Yahya, 2006).

8- Audio conferences: This technique consists of the use of a regular phone connected to several telephone lines that connect the lecturers remotely to a number of students in different places and away from the classroom and characterized by interaction

between them (Abdullah Yahya, 2006).

9- Interactive video: is the integration of computer and video and the integration process included the same video that played an active role where studies indicated that the interaction between the learner and the educational program improves the performance of the learner and helps to keep the information for a longer time (Zakaria, 2005).

10- Virtual campus: a website that the student can access and walk between virtual colleges and departments and contact boards by connecting to the Internet without actually going to the institution study site (Zakaria, 2005).

11- Virtual classroom: A set of activities that resemble the activities of the traditional classroom carried out by a teacher and a student, separated by spatial barriers but they work together at the same time regardless of where they are where they are where students interact with each other through online dialogue, and they print messages that everyone who contacted the network can see (Zakaria, 2005).

### **The Role of the Teacher in E-Learning**

The role that focuses on the teacher in education in general is an important and key role in the educational process because it is one of its pillars, and in e-learning the role of the teacher increases and this is contrary to what some believe that e-learning leads to the marginalization of his role and ultimately dispensed with it, and in order to become an e-teacher needs an intellectual formulation through which he is convinced that the traditional teaching method must change to suit the vast amount of knowledge that is encased in all areas of life, It is necessary to learn modern methods of teaching and effective strategies and to deepen understanding of its philosophy and master its application, so that it can convey this thought to its students and practice it through e-learning techniques ( Abdel-Wakeel,2002).

### **E-University Education**

The educational process needs to interact between the teacher and the learner and the students among themselves, and the need to catch up with the university e-education does not mean the dispensation of the traditional university or teacher, but we are in an era of increasing demand for education where it is not possible to settle for cement and iron universities, and it is necessary to move in part to air universities or open or electronic universities, the names are multiple and one concept, the need for these universities increases year after year. Because almost every year thousands of students coming to universities do not have seats to study, and the options in front of them are limited and narrow, this is the case of opening the horizon of choice by introducing e-university education .( Abdel- Wakeel,2002).

### **Virtual University Concept**

A university institution that provides telecommunications education through modern electronic media, the product of information technology and communications such as

the Internet, channels and satellites that publish lectures, programs, courses, design and production of educational information, evaluate students and implement successful goals for specific purposes ( Abdel-Wakeel,2002).

It is also an academic institution that aims to ensure the highest levels of higher education for students in places of residence through the Internet, through the creation of an integrated elearning environment based on a sophisticated network ( Abdel-Wakeel,2002).

### **The difficulties of applying e-learning are**

On the learners' hand:

- Difficulty in switching from the traditional method of education to the modern way.
- Difficulty of application in some materials.
- The difficulty of the availability of computers in some students.
- Directing some teachers may lead to misperception.
- On the teachers' side:
- Difficulty dealing with learners who are not trained in self-education.
- Difficulty to make sure that the student is able to use the computer.
- The degree of complexity of some materials.
- Copyright problem ( Al-Sartawi, 2004).

It was added that there are a number of obstacles to achieving e-learning, the most prominent of which are:

- Poor infrastructure for most developing countries.
- The difficulty of internet access and its high fees.
- Lack of knowledge of computer-learning internet browsing techniques.
- Difficulty in applying the tools and means of evaluation.
- The failure of some official bodies to recognize the certificates granted by electronic universities.
- Faculty is not convinced of the use of electronic media.
- High cost in the design and production of educational software ( Ihab Mukhtar, 2005).

## **International Experiences in E-Learning**

Many countries have conducted pioneering experiments in the application of different elearning systems, and here we will review some of them:

### *Japan experience:*

Japan started in 1994 with a television network project in which educational materials are broadcast via video materials for schools on demand through cable as a first step to distance education, and in 1995 started the 100 schools project, where schools are equipped for the purpose of processing and developing educational activities and educational software through that network.

In 1996-1997, the Center for Electronic Libraries approved the support of scientific research, support, especially in terms of scientific research techniques and support for the employment of Internet networks in institutes and colleges, and Japan is now one of the countries that officially apply modern e-learning methods in most Japanese schools.

### *Experience USA:*

In 1995, the United States completed all of its plans for computer applications and was interested in training teachers to help their colleagues, also students, and providing the infrastructure for the process (21).

In the United States of America today, more than 2,000 higher education institutions broadcast at least one of their programs online, and this percentage increases annually and these universities vary in the number of online courses and specialties offered by them (Polfelaf, 2013).

### *Malaysia experience:*

In 1996, the State Comprehensive Development Committee developed a comprehensive technical plan and a symbol of education in it in the 1996 education contract, which aims to introduce computers and internet connection in each classroom, and in 1999 the percentage of schools reached more than 90 percent and called smart schools.

### *Experience Britain:*

In Britain, a national education network has been established, through which more than 32,000 schools have been connected to the Internet, nine million students, 40,000 teachers, and each student has been given an electronic address and various educational sites have been connected to this network, and this process is constantly evolving in Britain.

## **E-Learning in Algeria - Bechar University Model**

Education in Algeria is a priority in development projects, and in its future policy, as well as the subject of attention attached to the state in its various segments and

categories, believing that education is the best investment and that the educated individual is the basis of progress and advancement in a changing society, developed and open to all that is new.

Most universities in the developed world are turning to the increasing use of e-learning due to the extreme importance that distinguishes it from traditional education, coinciding with the emergence and development of the information-communication revolution and the accompanying unprecedented flow of information and knowledge, the form of e-learning is one aspect, because of the uniqueness of this unconventional pattern of easy use of its services, and the provision of educational opportunities for people who may be It is difficult for them to join the education system in its traditional form, in addition to contributing to overcoming some of the problems of higher education.

Despite the delay of our universities in this field, they are currently witnessing some attempts in this context, which shows that the use of e-learning in higher education levels in particular, is an end and goal sought by all educational institutions advanced in Algerian universities, where work has begun on the preparation of infrastructure, the preparation of human resources, as the state has provided Algerian universities with internet lines, computerization centers and information in all college locations, Despite all this, communication is still weak between faculty members and students, and the lack of online content of courses all the time and in a way that encourages study, many faculty members still rely on traditional teaching to provide lectures and lessons as a way of teaching, and this calls for knowing the reality of using this type of education in Algerian universities. (Polfelaf, 2013)

### **The reality of e-learning at the University of Bechar**

Among the most important concepts related to e-learning are the concept of distance learning, direct learning, open learning, online learning using simultaneous or recorded lessons, video technologies (image and sound), electronic presentation techniques (video lectures broadcast over the Internet).

Through the results of some researches and studies in this context it turns out that professors are sufficiently familiar with the concept of e-learning and have a good knowledge of the most important concepts related to what allows to say that theoretical knowledge of this modern technology is not a problem for professors and this is because they are either familiar with what is published about them in scientific journals and books or because they are users of these techniques in teaching as well as in research work.

The application of e-learning at the university varies from department to college to college, increasing its use in scientific and technical disciplines, while reducing its use in scientific and applied disciplines more than theoretical scientific disciplines.

Its use is generally average, as presentation techniques such as "Data Chow", i.e. the presentation of information, and the preparation of lectures in the form of PowerPoint, have evolved remarkably, but the availability of lessons and availability on the Internet is still somewhat decent, as some professors resort to showing their lessons in their own blogs instead of the university site because of its weakness and lack of greetings.

With regard to the difficulties faced by the application of e-learning at the Algerian University, they can be summarized in the following points:

- Poor internet, where there must be a high flow speed, which is what Algeria lacks, as the speed of flow according to the latest statistics is among the weakest in the world.
- The weakness of university sites, their non-permanent and non-organization, due to the lack of specialists in this field.
- The lack of awareness of the professor as well as his lack of interest in this type of education due to the lack of interest on the part of officials in this type of education because they are from the traditional education generation.
- The university's lack of interest in this type of education, and its lack of activation by states by not harnessing all the possibilities for this type of education.
- The student's lack of desire for this type of learning because he wants ready-made lectures, and prefers the traditional method so that the latter is characterized by the lack of effort on the part of the student who is content to receive only. (Polfelaf, 2013)

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this research is to study the topic of e-learning in light of the current transformations and future stakes and what challenges face its application at the University of Algeria in particular. The impact of the pandemic on the conduct of lessons at the universities level in Algeria, which were not equipped for such situations during the outbreak of the emerging corona virus, and try to analyze the situation and then proposing some solutions that can work if it hurts humanity and the Algerians, especially an epidemic like the Corona virus pandemic (COVID-19). With our work and hard work with cooperation and perseverance we can reach, achieve our goals no matter how difficult we face, we must try and the country has given us a lot and it is time to change, to succeed, to develop.

## **References**

- [1] Adel Al-Sartawi and happiness, using the computer and the Internet in the fields of education, 1st edition, Dar Al-Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 2004.



- [2] Al-Ibrahim Ibrahim Abdel-Wakeel, Using Computer in Education, 1st edition, Dar Al- Fikr, Amman, 2002.
- [3] Al Muhi Abdullah Yahya, Quality in E-Learning from Design to Education Strategies, working paper submitted to the International Conference on Distance Education 2729 March 2006, Muscat, Oman.
- [4] Al-Musa Abdullah Al-Aziz, e-learning, its concept, characteristics, benefits, and obstacles. A working paper submitted (for a symposium on the future school), College of Education, King Saud University, 23-24 October 2002.
- [5] Grove. Anoly. E-learning retrived 22 march 2004 internet web site <http://www.cognitivedesignsolutions.com.e-learning>.
- [6] Haifa Al-Mabrik, Method of lecture in university education using e-learning with a proposed model and a working paper for the Symposium of the Future School, College of Education, King Saud University, 23-24 October 2002.
- [7] Ibrahim Polfelaf, Adel Sheheb, the reality of e-learning at the Algerian University - a field study - Introduction to the third international conference on: "E-learning and distance education", 2013, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- [8] Lal Zakaria and Al-Jundi Alia, Electronic Communication and Educational Technology, 4th edition, Obeikan Library, Riyadh, 2005.
- [9] Muhammad Ihab Mukhtar, Distance Learning and its Challenges for E-Learning, Working Paper Presented to the 12th Scientific Conference on Information Systems and Technology, Cairo, 15-17 February 2005.
- [10] Salem Ahmed Mohamed, Educational Technology and Technology Education, Cairo 2004.

# Pupil's Individual Behavior and Its Impact on Classroom Management

**Lenida Lekli**

PhD, "Aleksander Xhuvani" University, Albania

## Abstract

Various social changes have influenced family and school, these two important institutions, reducing in this way the efficacy of the strategies implemented by teachers in achieving a successful management of the classroom. This is the reason why conducting research on *individual's behavior* is being paid more attention recently, as a key element but also as a possible strategy which would guarantee efficacy during the lesson. The purpose of this research is pointing out and highlighting some of the factors that cause problematic behaviors, the theoretical approaches that treat person's behavior and its influence, as well as the discussion of strategies implemented by teachers in reducing disruptive behaviors of the pupils. Considering pupils as unique individuals, characterized by unique behavioral patterns requiring featured classroom strategies could lead to classroom management success as well as higher pupils' school progress.

**Keywords:** pupil's individual behavior, classroom management

## Introduction

Lack of respect, disagreements, bullying, use of indecent vocabulary, lesson abandonment, lack of motivation, etc. constitute some of the most typical forms of undesirable behaviors reflected by pupils which considerably influence not only the process of classroom management but also the efficacy in the achievement of high results during the teaching process.

Problematic behaviors inside the school environment are not a new, unprecedented phenomenon. However, it is to be highlighted that the frequency of the occurrence of such behaviors, and their complexity has been increasingly requiring attention over the last years by the educational institutions. A great variety of social changes reflected in our schools and families have dramatically decreased the efficacy of the managing strategies implemented by the teachers during the teaching process. In most of the cases, educators try to address and solve undesirable instantaneous behaviors of the pupils, without reflecting over the reasons that lead to such pupils' reactions.

Pupil's behavior, or the individual's one, a key element that highly influences the teaching process, and the classroom management constitute an essential stimulus in writing this paper.

## **Methodology**

The writing and preparation of this paper has been based on the consultation of different resources, mainly in English language. There have been considered not only different scientific theoretical materials but there have also been used the results of the observations conducted in different classes of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade system school, as well as the results of the student-teachers' observations during their 5-week teaching practice at Master level studies. The paper has been focused only on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade system schools (pupils belonging to ages 10-15 years old) and not secondary ones (students aged 15-18 years old), in order to avoid misconceptions of pupils' behavioral impact on classroom management between these two age groups, since they do reflect a variety of fundamental behavioral differences. Teachers' opinions over this topic have been of great support in the realization of this paper too.

## **Defining the term "Behavior"**

What does "*behavior*" mean? Why do educators or teachers stick so much on this element considering it as a key feature of the teaching process that highly influences classroom management? How important is managing disruptive behaviors among pupils in the classroom in increasing teaching efficacy? Can pupil's behavior be considered as a regulator or stabilizer of the classroom climate encouraging a positive pupil-pupil or pupil-teacher interaction? Providing answer to these questions as well as others too, it is worth continuing this topic by first citing a definition on the word "*behavior*" mentioned by Bardhyl Musaj (2003) in his book *Metodologji e Mesimdhenies* (Teaching Methodology):

"The word "*behavior*" is accompanied by the word objective, and consequently pupil's learning is defined as a change of continuous behavior." (Musaj, 2003, p.35). The reason in citing this sentence as a definition of the term "*behavior*" focuses exactly on the use of the three words included in it: "*objective*", "*change*", and "*continuous*". According to this definition, pupil's behavior is described as an objective reaction, a visually measurable change of attitude easily perceived and observed by the teacher which directly influences classroom climate and environment. It is precisely the observation of these pupils' behavioral demonstration that enables the gathering and generation of concrete data from the teachers. The results of these data contribute in reviewing the pros and cons of the teaching process and classroom management, as well as the establishment of classroom discipline.

In our society there are present two different contradictory views regarding the management of the individuals' undesirable behaviors. On one side there are specialists who study children's general development, who categorically oppose the use of physical punishment as a preventive means of disruptive attitudes, and the

problems derived from them. What these experts recommend is discipline achieved through close cooperation between teachers and pupils, or parents and children through explanation and positive attitude reinforcement instead of verbal intimidation or application of physical punishment.

On the other side, there are few educators and parents who consider the use of physical punishment as the only manner in controlling and stabilizing children and pupils' problematic attitudes.

Therefore, the purpose is prevention of these disruptive behaviors, their positive transformation through what is known otherwise as "*assertive discipline*" (Zajazi, T. 2003, p.634). Assertive discipline, or otherwise known as behavioral firm control, is closely connected to a set of techniques educators, teachers or even parents use in order to prevent or correct pupils' undesirable reactions reflected in the school environment. However, what needs to be stressed is that the application of such techniques over individual's behavior modification does not always guarantee immediate positive results. Efforts by teachers and parents need to be continuous until a well-managed classroom environment is achieved which would not harm the teaching process.

### **Factors that influence pupils' disruptive behaviors**

In educational institutions, teachers as well as other school staff need to be aware of the factors that encourage pupils' problematic attitudes. Therefore, identification of these factors could serve as an initial crucial step towards the prevention of such behaviors inside the classroom or in other environments within the school.

Problematic behaviors can be caused by a number of reasons. Consciously or unconsciously most of us do attach the reasons of such attitudes to the family environment of the pupils, peers, media violence as well as many other factors beyond the teachers' activity spectrum in the classroom (Karaj, Th., (nd), p.1-2) But, it is to be highlighted that there are also factors directly related to the classroom activity, which can be treated or intervened by the teachers in collaboration with the school leaders too. Factors of these undesirable behaviors can be generally classified into six different groups (Flicker, E. & Hoffman, J., 2006, p.12-13):

*Emotional factors* (temperament, anxiety, fears, boredom, need for attention and care, low self-esteem, etc.)

*Family* (divorce, drug abuses, family violence, etc.)

*School* (overcrowded classrooms, noises, violent games, lack of clear instructions and rules in the classroom, etc.)

*Physical factors* (malnutrition, tiredness, hunger, illnesses, pains, etc.)

*Learning difficulties* (sometimes depending on the character of the pupils, etc.)

*Community factors* (peers' influence, poverty, media violence and community violence, etc.)

All this range of factors are present in our schools and the environment that surrounds us, considerably influencing the occurrence and frequency of the pupils' improper reactions. Consideration of the above mentioned factors, regarding individual general development too, constitutes an essential step towards the creation of a positive and supporting classroom climate for the pupils, avoiding to some extent the variety of difficulties teachers encounter with. Furthermore, a cooperative relationship between parents and teachers would consolidate a sustainable linking bridge between home and school, whose result would be children's successful educational background.

### **Theoretical approaches on Individual's behavior and its impact**

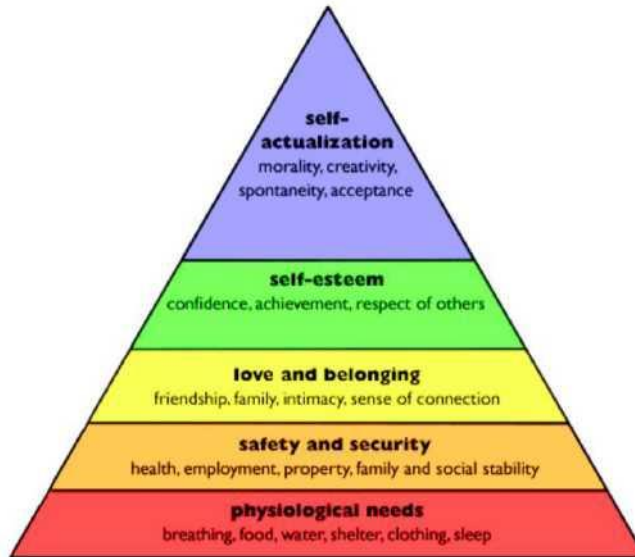
The famous researcher William Glasser (Tauber, R. 2007, p. 171-175 ) has broadly treated the concept of individual behavior. The theory elaborated by him is known otherwise as the *Reality Theory*.

"According to him, acting and behaving in a particular manner in a given situation, assessing the positive and negative sides of that attitude is fundamental and considerably influences the behavior of each of us." (Glasser, W. "Reality Therapy, n.d.) Connecting this theory with the teaching process, more precisely with the classroom management, it is to be mentioned that teachers need to encourage pupils to assess and judge their behavioral reflections in order to be able to distinguish acceptable behaviors from unacceptable ones.

For example those pupils, who reflect aggressive reactions in the classroom, they often damage classroom materials, cause conflicts among their peers, etc. Motivation and encouragement of this group of pupils in judging and reflecting over the negative and positive aspects of their attitudes offers them the possibility of making the right choices. Therefore, encouraging pupils to think in this way, by criticizing their wrong actions and stimulating or rewarding their proper behaviors whenever they occur, can undoubtedly help in minimizing problems or troubles in the classroom triggered by pupils themselves.

Besides William Glasser's research on the topic, it is to be emphasized that studies conducted by Abraham Maslow too on individual's needs have significantly contributed upon the teaching process as well as the classroom management too.

Fig. 1 Maslow's Needs Hierarchy



(Retrieved from: <https://medium.com/@jnnielsen/inverting-maslows-hierarchy-b2c32156f091>)

Individual's Needs Hierarchy consisting of needs ranked according to their importance (starting from biological or physical needs up to self-actualization), and the fulfillment of these needs highly influences pupils' behaviors. The more fulfilled or completed these needs are, the lower will problems be for the teachers and pupils during the teaching process; the easier will the prevention and elimination of improper behaviors be; and the easier will the achievement of a well-managed classroom be during the teaching process.

The first category of the above needs' hierarchy diagram, biological and physiological needs which constitute the bottom of the pyramid, are crucial since their fulfillment is fundamental not only inside the school environment but even outside it. The fulfillment of pupils' biological needs can be explained through pupils' feeding need during the 20-minute break after the third hour finishes. When the fulfillment of this need fails, which biologically guarantees the well-functioning of their physical body, pupils are not likely to be concentrated during the teaching process, consequently there is a higher probability that they cause improper behaviors for the teachers and their peers.

The second category of the needs' hierarchy consists of safety and security needs. Inside the classroom pupils need to feel secure, and not frightened or threatened. Teachers by realizing a well-managed classroom, they can offer pupils security and safety. The more fulfilled these two basic needs are, the fewer will disciplinary problems be for both teachers and pupils.

People are human species, consequently they require warmth, closeness, love in order to feel good in a particular environment. When pupils feel their teacher's care and attention, it means they have fulfilled the next hierarchical need of the pyramid, that of love and belonging. When the first three hierarchical needs of the pyramid are realized, the fourth one that of self-esteem may become dominant or obvious in pupils' character. Pupils will believe in themselves, they will believe in their skills and abilities, serving as an encouragement for further achievements in their life. The opposite is likely to happen when their self-esteem is low, they are going to experience an inferiority feeling, they are going to feel weak, worthless, etc., influencing negatively in their attitudes versus their peers.

Finally, at the top of Maslow's pyramid stands self-actualization need, which naturally comes as a result of the realization of the other needs of this hierarchy. Hence, Maslow reinforces the necessity of fulfilling these individual's needs, since they directly and undoubtedly influence the individual behavior of each of us.

Strategies used by the teachers in reducing pupils' problematic behaviors in the classroom

As mentioned above, the factors that lead to the occurrence of pupils' problematic behaviors are numerous. What needs to be highlighted is that teachers need to take into consideration a variety of elements before deciding upon the application of a specific strategy that would encourage the reduction of undesirable behaviors. It is essential that they consider pupils' age, their background, their family, financial situation of their families, parents and friends' educational background, pupil's individual temperament, etc. All these elements together seem to frame what is known in Applied Linguistics as "*the context*", (Miller, B. 2003, p.55) whose role is essential when it comes to the selection of the appropriate strategy in tackling with improper behaviors.

But what kind of strategies do teachers apply in order to reduce the problematic reactions of the pupils?

How effective are these strategies in avoiding them and creating a favorable climate in the classroom?

Does the same strategy work in the same way with the same age groups?

Is there an immediate positive reaction after the implementation of a particular strategy?

These and many other questions come naturally when it comes to the selection and application of various techniques which can be used aiming at reducing problematic reactions of the pupils. Teachers/ educators have the power to change the situation in the classroom in their favour, avoiding the use of physical or verbal punishment, considered to be as one of the most traditional behavioral control technique. It is to be emphasized that, verbally or physically punished pupils do have the tendency to



respond rudely / impolitely not only versus their peers but also versus their parents and teachers. Instead of punishments teachers may encourage discussions and cooperation as a positive manner in increasing teacher-pupil partnership. Observations have shown that when educators use this strategy with the most problematic group ages, such as the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the results have been promising.

The above mentioned list of factors influencing the frequency of improper behaviors, also includes the *school factor*, which incorporates the establishment of clear instructions and rules that pupils need to follow. Sometimes, not compiling and presenting clear instructions to the pupils by the teachers or the school leadership can trigger various behavioral problems in the school or classroom environment. The clearer the school or classroom regulation is for the pupils, the lower will the frequency of improper behaviors reflected during the teaching process be (Cook, 2003, p.49-50)

Teachers' interviews have shown that an efficient way concerning this element is also setting and using Classroom Contracts/ Regulations, besides overall school ones which consist of general basic rules pupils have to obey or respect inside the educational institution.

Managing pupils' failures by helping them increase their self-confidence constitutes a positive way in avoiding undesirable behaviors too. Classroom diversity implies not only diverse pupils' backgrounds but also diversity in their learning skills/abilities. In cases when teachers apply *differentiated instruction*, they take into consideration the abilities and skills of each pupil, encouraging each of them. Otherwise pupils' failures, as well as the non-appropriate selection of techniques by the teachers might become a reason for encouraging instead of reducing these types of attitudes in the classroom.

In spite of the above mentioned strategies, there exist other techniques which can be implemented by teachers in order to avoid or reduce undesirable attitudes inside the school environment such as:

continuous participation and motivation of pupils,

assessment of pupils' achievements even when they are not frequent,

increasing cooperation between teachers and parents,

encouraging positive social behaviors inside the classroom environment, etc.

In the broad range of such strategies, teachers can select the most appropriate ones for their pupils, considering different elements such as the ones mentioned above. What is essential is the selection of a particular strategy whose result would be positive and effective during the teaching process.

## Conclusions

This paper focuses on the treatment of individual behavior as a key feature in the achievement of a favorable climate during the teaching process, in order to guarantee a successful classroom management. Pupil's reactions, the frequency of pupils' improper attitudes, etc. constitute one of the challenges teachers encounter with nowadays. This paper presents a general picture of this topic starting with the definitions provided to the term "behavior", factors that influence the frequency of pupils' undesirable attitudes inside the classroom, finalizing with the strategies used by teachers in reducing them.

Furthermore, the paper also discusses the approaches of two famous researchers W. Glasser and A. Maslow over this issue, providing assistance for teachers and parents in dealing with such challenges. Teachers and parents both struggle in attempting to reduce to some extent these pupils' challenging behaviors, which often harm the teaching process and negatively influence pupils' academic achievements. However, frequent societal changes, as well as the surrounding environment outside the educational institutions are factors to be highly considered when talking about the frequency of such problematic behaviors.

## References

- [1] Cook, G. (2003). *Applied linguistics*. "Context and Culture". Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Flicker, E. & Hoffman, J. (2006). *Developmental Psychology in the Classroom*. New York, US: Teachers College Press.
- [3] Glasser, W. (June 2020) "Reality Therapy." Retrieved from <http://www.wglasser.com/the-glasser-approach/reality-therapy>.
- [4] Karaj, Th. *Menaxhimi i Klases*. Tirane, Albania: Emal.
- [5] Maslow's Hierarchy (22 June 2020), Retrieved from
- [6] <https://medium.com/@jnnielsen/inverting-maslows-hierarchy-b2c32156f091>
- [7] Miller, B. (2003). *Si te krijohet kontakti i sukseshem me nxenesit*. Tirane, Shqiperi: QPEA (Qendra per perparimin e Edukimit dhe Arsimit).
- [8] Musai, B. (2003). *Metodologji e Mesimdhenies*. Tirane, Shqiperi: Pegi.
- [9] Tauber, R. (2007) . *Classroom management*. US: Praegers Publishers.
- [10] Walters, J. & Frei, Sh. (2007). *Managing Classroom Behavior and Discipline*. USA: Corinne Burton M.A.Ed Press.
- [11] Zajazi, T. (2003). *Metodologji te Mesimdhenies dhe Mesimnxenies*. Shkup, Maqedoni: Vinsent Graphic.